

THE
RELIGION OF LIFE:

OR,
CHRIST AND NICODÉMUS.

BY JOHN G. MANLY.

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"The Life was the Light of men."  
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To the Memory of

THE

LATE MR. ANDREW STEVENSON, OF LANARK, ONT.,

My first friend in Christ ;

TO THE REV. JAMES BROCK, OF LINDSAY,

My first Clerical friend ;

TO MR. JOHN MACDONALD, M.P., OF TORONTO,

The Canadian friend of my Missionary life ;

To the Memory of

THE LATE REV. W. URWICK, D.D., OF DUBLIN,

clarum et venerabile nomen,

The friend of my Congregational life ;

and

To the Methodist Church of Canada,

The Brotherhood

of my Original and Resumed Church life,

I affectionately dedicate

"THE RELIGION OF LIFE."

J. G. M.

TORONTO, May, 1875.

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CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

	<i>Page</i>
Conversation in general	xv
Nicodemus and Jesus	xvi
Time of their conversation	<i>ib.</i>
Place of their conversation	xviii
Theme of their conversation	<i>ib.</i>
Character of their conversation	xix
Plan of their conversation	<i>ib.</i>
Usefulness to Nicodemus	xx
Usefulness generally	xxi
Dr. Alford's Revised Version of the Conversation	xxii

CHAPTER I.

TRUE RELIGION IS NEW LIFE.

§ 1. *The new birth is the Beginning of new life.*

John iii. 1-3	I
How Nicodemus begins	<i>ib.</i>

	<i>Page</i>
Nature and Use of Miracles	1
Answer of Jesus	2
Birth is the Beginning of Life	3
Every Religion is either Vital or Mechanical	4
Vital Religion is Love	5

§ 2. *The inception of new life is a Spiritual cleansing.*

John iii. 4, 5	6
Nicodemus's objection	<i>ib.</i>
Meaning of the Answer	7
Parallel Passage: Luke iii. 16	8
No reference to Water-baptism	10

§ 3. *Spiritual Purity is the Nature of God in Man.*

John iii. 6	12
Homogeneousness of Parent and Child	<i>ib.</i>
Flesh and Spirit	<i>ib.</i>
Regeneration the only Beginning of Human Holiness	13
Human Holiness is Divine Likeness	<i>ib.</i>
No Higher Aspect of True Religion	14

§ 4. *Regeneration is a Mysterious certainty.*

John iii. 7, 8	15
Operation of the Holy Spirit generally	<i>ib.</i>
His Emblem is the Wind	<i>ib.</i>
Our Knowledge of this	16
Knowledge of our own Salvation two-fold	17
Development of our Sonship	18
Mystery of the Spirit	<i>ib.</i>

§ 5. *The mysterious certainty of regeneration is the Consent of Revelation.*

John iii. 9, 10	20
How to meet persistent prejudice	<i>ib.</i>

CONTENTS.

vii

Page		Page
1	Main purport of Old Testament	21
2	Many are like Nicodemus	22
3		
4		
5		
	§ 6. <i>The consent of Revelation is Christ's own testimony.</i>	
ng.	John.iii. 11, 12, 13	23
6	Competency of Christ to testify	24
ib.	Meaning of " Kingdom of Heaven "	ib.
7	" Earthly Things " and " Heavenly Things "	26
8		
10		
	§ 7. <i>What Christ himself now testifies is Absolutely necessary.</i>	
un.	Something in Religion is necessary	29
12	Everything in Religion is not necessary	ib.
ib.	What is necessary	30
ib.	Christ reiterates the necessity	31
13	The necessity re-Affirmed	32
ib.		
14		
	<i>Resume of the chapter</i>	33

CHAPTER II.

NEW LIFE IS THE FRUIT OF DEATH.

§ 1. *The Death that gives life.*

Consent	John iii. 14	34
	Cause of life illustrated	35
20	Vicarious Death pervades the Bible	36
ib.	Two aspects of this death	37

§ 2. *The Life that springs from death.*

	<i>Page</i>
John iii. 15	38
Life is Safety	<i>ib.</i>
Life is Union with God	40

§ 3. *The Faith that finds life.*

John iii. 15	41
Varieties of faith	<i>ib.</i>
Saving faith belongs only to the Repentant	42
Saving faith is faith in Christ	<i>ib.</i>
Distinction of faith before repentance and after	44
Incipient faith is the Means of Life	45
The faith in Christ of the repentant always finds Life	46
Persevering faith	47

CHAPTER III.

FRUITFUL DEATH IS THE GIFT OF LOVE.

§ 1. *The Love of God to Man is Parental in its Nature.*

John iii. 16	48
This is the Truth to be believed for Salvation	<i>ib.</i>
The Love of God in the New Testament	<i>ib.</i>
God's Love is Parental	49
Children and Servants distinguished	50

§ 2. *The love of God to man is Benignant in its End.*

Page		Page
38	John iii. 16	51
ib.	Love is Kind	ib.
40	Kindness may be partly admeasured by the Danger it averts	52
	Partly also by the Life it confers	ib.
	Especially by the life of God's Children	53

§ 3. *The love of God to Man is Exhaustive in its Means.*

41	John iii. 16	54
ib.	The best test of love is the Practical	ib.
42	God shows his love to us in a Divine Gift	ib.
ib.	In the gift of Himself	55
44	In the gift of his Son for Humiliation	56
45		
46		
47		

§ 4. *The love of God to Man is Gratuitous in its Method.*

	John iii. 16	58
	Preparation and Achievement distinguished	ib.
	Exchange and Gratitude contrasted	ib.
	God freely saves the Ungodly on Believing	60
	He saves all that believe	61

§ 5. *The love of God to Man is Universal in its Scope.*

48	John iii. 16, 17	63
ib.	Meaning of the word " <i>Cosmos</i> ," World	ib.
ib.	God's Love of the World is not Actual Universal Salvation	65
49	No Warrant for Faith but General Love and a General Overture	ib.
50		

	<i>Page</i>
The Scope of the Son's Mission Coincides with the Scope of the Father's Munificence	66
God's Conservative and Restorative Government	67
Restorative Government embraces all the Human Space and Time of this World from the Fall	70
The Religions of Conscience, Law and Love	71

CHAPTER IV.

THE GIFT OF LOVE IS THE CHOICE OF FAITH.

§ 1. Religion is Personal.

John iii. 18	73
Faith is Personal, not hereditary or gregarious . . .	<i>ib.</i>
This Doctrine always Requisite	<i>ib.</i>
Meaning of "the Name of the Only-Begotten Son of God"	75
The Object of saving faith is, first, the Father's Love : .	<i>ib.</i>
Divine anger and wrath explained	76
The Object of saving faith is, secondly, the Son's Sin- Bearing	79
Faith and Unbelief Purely Personal	81
Both Testaments show this	82

§ 2. Religion is Determinate.

John iii. 18	83
The Object of religious faith or unbelief is GOD . . .	<i>ib.</i>
Believing is a process of Consciousness	84
Unconsciousness of belief means unbelief	85

CONTENTS.

xi

Page

ope . 66
 . 67
 ace . 70
 . 71

§ 3. Religion is Voluntary.

H.

	Page
John iii. 19	86
Voluntary and involuntary relations to God	<i>ib.</i>
Divine condemnation is for evil in the light	87
And for evil from the Heart	89
And the evil of Choice	<i>ib.</i>
Evil deeds breed Evil Love	90
Evil love produces Evil Practice	91
Evil choice and love are Early and Progressive	<i>ib.</i>
Nothing adjudicable but Choice and its Consequences	93
Faith and Unbelief are Consequences of Choice	<i>ib.</i>
Hence Responsibility for religious belief	94
Why Christ so often specifies faith in connection with salvation	<i>ib.</i>

§ 4. Religion is Practical.

od"
 :
 Sin-

John iii. 19, 20, 21	98
Moral and Physical distinguished	<i>ib.</i>
Good and Evil distinguished	99
Nothing Moral but Choice and its Consequences	<i>ib.</i>
Choice consists of either Intention or Action, or of both	100
Every moral being chooses either good or evil	<i>ib.</i>
Right choice results in Faith, Wrong in Unbelief	101
True religion is Practical	<i>ib.</i>
So the whole Bible teaches	102

§ 5. Evil practice Shuns detection.

John iii. 20	103
Evil doers denoted	<i>ib.</i>
Evil doers hate light and love darkness	104
Evil doing breeds hatred to the Truth	105
The Concealment and Cowardice of Guilt illustrated	106
Detection and punishment inevitable	107

. 83
 . *ib.*
 . 84
 . 85

§ 6. *Good Works Openly glorify God.*

	<i>Page</i>
John iii. 21	107
What is Truth?	<i>ib.</i>
"The Truth" is Practical	110
How the Christian comes to the Light	111
What is "Wrought in God" is made Manifest	112

CHAPTER V.

IMPLICATIONS.

§ 1. *The Glory of Life.*

This Conversation should be Reviewed and Generalized .	114
Something is Implied in it as well as Expressed .	<i>ib.</i>
Its Theme throughout is Spiritual Life	<i>ib.</i>
What is Life?	115
The Life of the Soul Illustrated	<i>ib.</i>
Its Greatness	116
Incomparable	<i>ib.</i>

§ 2. *The Agency of Life.*

The Agency of Spiritual Life is both Divine and Human .	118
The Divine Agency is Life-Giving	<i>ib.</i>

CONTENTS.

xiii

	Page
The Human Agency is Life-receiving	119
Scripture Proof of this	121

§ 3. *The Trinity of Life.*

God is Life	123
How Reverently we should consider this	<i>ib.</i>
How the Trinity of the Godhead is taught in the New Testament	<i>ib.</i>
God is not a solitary eternal Monad	126
Or merely Economically Three	<i>ib.</i>

§ 4. *The Course of Life.*

Course of the Conversation	127
Course of Saving Agency	<i>ib.</i>
Course of Divine Agency	<i>ib.</i>
The Agency of the Father	128
The Agency of the Son :—	<i>ib.</i>
Mediation Two-Fold	<i>ib.</i>
Mediatorial Life distinguished from the Life of the Godhead	130
Import of Mediatorial Supremacy	131
Tenor of the Fourth Gospel	133
Importance of these Distinctions	136
The Agency of the Spirit :—	138
Representative	<i>ib.</i>
Restorative	139
Course of Human Agency :—	140
Repentance	<i>ib.</i>
Faith	141
Obedient Love	142

§ 5. *The Instruction of Life.*

	<i>Page</i>
This Conversation enables us to Teach as well as Learn .	142
Its Matter is Fundamental Truth	143
Presenting the Moral incipency of life before the Legal .	144
Presenting truth Practically	148
Presenting it to the Aged	149
Presenting it Comprehensively	150
As a Specimen of Christ's teaching	151
The Author's Special Interest in it	154



INTRODUCTION.



CONVERSATION well develops a man, because it is the contact and communion of minds, and because it is usually unstudied and spontaneous. As "the coldest bodies warm in contact, and the hardest sparkle in collision," so good conversation generates light and heat; and as "iron sharpens iron, so" in conversation, "the countenance of a man his friend." Many momentous conversations are recorded or referred to in the Bible. The redemption of the world was opened to our race, at the outset, by the conversation of God, in the garden, with our first parents. The chastisement of wickedness is opened to us by Divine conversation with Cain. The highest appreciation of the righteous is opened to us by Divine conversation with Abraham respecting Sodom. The preparation of ages for Christ is opened to us by Divine conversation with the father of the faithful. God spoke with Satan respecting Job; the tempter conversed with Jesus; Moses and Elijah, on the mount of transfiguration, conversed with the Master respecting his approaching decease; and Jesus, at

sundry times, conversed with his disciples and with others, particularly Nicodemus.

Everything, in this last case, contributes to importance and significance—the persons, the time, the place, the theme, the conversation itself, and the result. Nicodemus belonged to the world's most religious people and most favoured nation. He was not only a son of Abraham, but a member of the most religious, prominent, and powerful party in Abraham's race—the Pharisees; he belonged to the choicest men of that party, for he was a ruler, a member of the Grand Council of the Sanhedrin, educated and empowered to expound and enforce the revelation of God in the law and the prophets and the psalms. He was not a novice, but advanced in years, and well-experienced in the civil and spiritual affairs of his people; for when he asked if an old man could be born again, he plainly implied that he himself was old; and so he brought into this conversation the wisdom of years and the gravity of gray hairs. But a greater than Nicodemus is here. The Son of David is here, the Hope of Israel is here, the Light of the world, Immanuel himself, is here; and now, while he speaks, let us reverently and attentively listen; and whatever he says, let us weigh it and prize it, for it is the gold of the sanctuary—the wealth of supreme and eternal truth.

It is not in the dim mists of antiquity, it is not in the shadows of the world's morning, that Jesus and Nicodemus come together, but in the fulness of time. More than four thousand years have rolled away since the conversation of the garden inaugurated to man the

reign of redemptive grace and truth. Since then the world has been wrecked and rescued ; since then men's tongues have been confused and varied ; since then the race has been nationally divided and multiplied ; since then there has been a selection and a system to prepare for reconciliation ; since then great empires have flourished and perished ; since then Greece has risen to civilize the world and Rome to sway it ; and now has come the concentration of all foreshadowings and forerunnings—all predictions and preparations ; now in the reflected culture of Athens, now in the presence of imperial Rome, now in the convergent radiance of Moses and the prophets and the second Elijah, a Jewish ruler and the world's Redeemer are met for the interchange of common or peculiar thought.

It was the fulness of the world's time when Jesus conversed ; it was the night-time of an ordinary day when Nicodemus came to him. Whenever afterwards Nicodemus is mentioned, the time of his visit to Jesus is also mentioned, as if to show that the time had a meaning and a reason : " He that came to Jesus by night ; " * " who at the first came to Jesus by night. " † Nicodemus was not a disciple of Jesus when he came ; for though he begins with compliment, he soon evinces ignorance and unbelief. Estimating him by his own words, and by the character of his companions and friends, the Pharisees, there is no reason to suppose, as has been sometimes said, that he came at night for the sake of its stillness and seclusion. Whether he came for the gratification of curiosity only, or for in-

* John vii. 50.

† John xix. 39.

struction also, he came secretly and timidly, unwilling to be known in any sense as a disciple of the Nazarene. But whatever his motives, it was well that he came. It is well for every man, whatever his present religious condition, to read and hear God's word, to come within the range and reach of the truth, to afford the teachers of truth an opportunity of communication.

These two interlocutors are met at the world's centre. The affairs of mankind do not gravitate to Athens or to Rome, but to Jerusalem; for the temple of God is there, the oracles of God are there, and there, too, the only true Priest is about to offer the true and only sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. "Salvation is of the Jews."

They are met to converse on the theme of themes, religion the relationship between God and man, the kingdom that is over all forever. Men's ordinary topics find no place here. The weather, the crops and the war, party politics, the literature of time, human science, civilization, fleeting philosophy, are not now stirring the heart of Nicodemus or seeking to elicit the Master's weighty words. These two talk of God's kingdom and the men that shall enter it. They talk of escape from perdition, of God's love and its gifts, of the faith that saves and the unbelief that destroys. What can match such themes as these? They belong to us all; they are above all estimation and beyond all comparison; and they should be our great study and topic. A little longer, and we shall have nothing else to think of; a little longer, and we shall have nothing else to care for.

Very admirable and valuable is the conversation itself. The more we attempt to fathom it, the deeper we find it; the more we seek in it, the more it yields us; it is an unfailing spring of spiritual influence, an inexhaustible mine of heavenly wealth. Its theme, from beginning to end, is one, true religion; and the Wisdom of God presents this theme in its noblest and most appropriate aspect, the aspect of LIFE.

The conversation, as our Lord conducts and moulds it, contains four parts or portions. The first may be taken to include the first thirteen verses of the third chapter of the gospel according to John; the second part consists of the fourteenth verse and the fifteenth; the third, of the sixteenth and seventeenth; and the fourth comprehends the remaining four verses. It seems strange that any one should ever doubt the extension of the conversation to the end of the twenty-first verse. The beginning and the end are clearly marked. The introduction narrates that there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, who came to Jesus by night; and the conclusion is marked by the resumption of the evangelist's narrative at the twenty-second verse: "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea," the region lying south of Jerusalem. But the best evidence of the extent of the conversation is its own structure and import. The first part teaches us that true religion is new life, originating in a new birth, the birth of the Holy Spirit; the second part teaches us that this new life is the fruit of death, the death of the Son of Man; the third part teaches us that this fruitful death is the

gift of love, the love of the Father; and the fourth part teaches us that this gift of love is the choice of man, the choice of man by faith. "All are but parts of one stupendous whole." The several parts are most closely connected, and evince such consecutiveness, interdependence and unity as to compel the conviction that they form one divine and glorious whole, worthy of Him who spake as never man spake, and fraught with grace and truth to all that rightly read and learn.

Such a conversation, endlessly multiplied in speech and writing, over the world and down through the ages, could not be unproductive. It appears to have been profitable, first of all, to Nicodemus. The profit does not appear in the conversation itself (for profit is not always immediate), but in subsequent acts, which the evangelist significantly links with the nightly interview. When the Pharisees scoffed at their own officers as "deceived," for eulogizing Jesus instead of seizing him, and at the multitude that followed him as "cursed," "he that came to Jesus by night" said to his fellow Pharisees—"Doth our law judge any man before it hear him and know what he doeth?"* This was speaking manfully for fair play. When Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, obtained from Pilate the body of Jesus, "there came also Nicodemus, who at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred weight." Then Joseph and Nicodemus "took the body of Jesus and wound it in linen clothes, with the spices, as the

† John vii. 50, 51.

manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid." There Joseph and Nicodemus laid Jesus.* These men are coupled as kindred spirits, as if alike disciples of Jesus secretly for fear of the Jews. The expression that Nicodemus came to Jesus by night "at first," appears to imply that he was advanced from that beginning; that he was profiting by that great interview. It is remarkable also that in the first mention of Nicodemus, after the conversation, it is said he was "one of the Pharisees"; but in the second mention of him, in connection with Joseph, this description is omitted, as if to denote that he had ceased to be "one of them."

What Nicodemus heard at first by night has stirred the hearts of countless multitudes, and led them into life. Many, it is to be feared, have heard it and read it in vain, because of their counter-choice, their inattention and unbelief. Many, probably, have heard or read it at first with Nicodemus-like ignorance or incredulity, but afterwards pondered it with profit; and multitudes, by means of it, have been born again. It is for every man and for all time. It is for every pulpit, and Sunday School, and family; and its influence and efficacy are widening with the suns. The foremost doctrine of the Lutheran era was justification by faith; the foremost doctrine of the Methodistic era has been regeneration by the Spirit. The one implies the other, the one is the complement

* John xix. 38-42.

of the other, and both, in their Scriptural completeness and validity, are the mighty means of spiritual conquest and culture. They can never be superseded or rivalled : and their function will never be finished till, as the seed of the kingdom, they fill the face of the world with fruit, and the last believer is born into the family of God.

"BUT there was* a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him—'Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him.' Jesus answered and said unto him—'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus saith unto him—'How can a man be born when he is old ? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born ?' Jesus answered—'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and the Spirit,† he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which hath been born of the flesh is flesh, and that which hath been born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee ye must be born anew. The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth ; so is every one that hath been born of the Spirit.' Nicodemus answered and said unto

* "*Now there was*"—Dr. Geo. Campbell on the Four Gospels.

† "*Water and Spirit*"—Dr. G. Campbell. Εξ υδατος και πνευματος.

him—'How can these things be?' Jesus answered and said unto him—'Art thou the teacher of Israel, and understandest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee we speak that which we know, and testify that which we have seen, and ye receive not our testimony. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things? And no one hath ascended into heaven but he that came down from heaven, [even] the Son of Man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,* that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but might have eternal life. For God sent not his Son into the world that he might judge the world, but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth in him cometh not into judgment; but he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil.† For every one that doeth evil hateth the light,

* "If ye understand not when I told you earthly things, how will ye understand when I tell you heavenly things? For none ascendeth into heaven but he who descended from heaven—the Son of Man, whose abode is heaven. As Moses placed on high the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be placed on high," &c.—Dr. Geo. Campbell.

† "Now this is the ground of condemnation, that the light is come into the world, and men have preferred the darkness to the light, because their deeds were evil."—Dr. Geo. Campbell.

and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be detected. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."—John iii. 1-21.*

* From "The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, after the authorized version; newly compared with the original Greek, and revised. By Henry Alford, D.D., Dean of Canterbury. Strahan & Co., London, 1871."



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THE RELIGION OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

TRUE RELIGION IS NEW LIFE.

§ 1. *The new birth is the Beginning of new life.*

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews : the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him—' Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.' Jesus answered and said unto him—' Verily, verily, I say unto thee except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'"—John iii. 1-3.

NICODEMUS opens the conversation with a recognition and a reason. He recognizes Jesus as "a teacher come from God," and the reason he assigns is that "no man can do these miracles that thou doest except God be with him." Nothing could be more appropriate than the recognition or more valid than the reason. A miracle is the immediate act of God, to verify his message or accredit his messenger ; it is the seal of his commission. It ought not to be described as a violation or suspension of the laws of nature, but as a superior addition to them, a direct divine force, the immediate act or operation of the Author and Lord of nature, to do what nature alone is undesignated for and unadapted to. Nature everywhere indicates her Author, illustrates his perfections and sings his praise ; but alone, or

in her ordinary phenomena, is incapable of authenticating the Creator's special message or accrediting his special messenger. What does so authenticate and accredit we call a miracle, which means the direct action of the Author of nature, in the field of nature or on the forces or forms of nature. Who but God himself is competent to determine whether the condition of his human offspring requires special messages and means? And if he determines in the affirmative, it surely becomes him to vouchsafe the requisite attestation in miraculous change. This occurred so eminently and amply in the ministry of Jesus as to convince Nicodemus of a divine function. Jesus is divine, and his teaching is divine, for, in his own name, he acts directly on nature, healing sickness and disease, restoring life, correcting organic faults and defects, creatively multiplying human sustenance, controlling the winds and the waves. The wisdom of his teaching, to Nicodemus and others, befits the might of his working; and each illustrates the other.

The recognized teacher at once evinces his wisdom and authority by aptly presenting religion to the ruler under the aspect of divine rule or kingship, and declaring the primary pre-requisite: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The words "verily, verily," or "amen, amen," are a form of solemn and emphatic asseveration, to indicate the importance of the lesson about to be given and to fix the attention of the hearer. One thing is needful for the kingdom of God, and our Lord denotes it by the words γεννηθῇ ἀνωθεν (*gennethee anowthen*), translated "born again." What do these words mean? The verb γίναω (*gennao*) occurs ninety-seven times in the New Testament, and always denotes the beginning of life; and in nineteen

instances it is used to denote the beginning of spiritual or religious life, as in this instance in relation to the kingdom of God. There is no necessity for any dispute as to whether *ανωθεν* (anōthen) means "from above" or "again." It means both. To be born "anōthen" is to be born "from above," born of the Highest, because at verses five and six and eight, it is explained as born of "the Spirit." To be born of the Spirit is to be born again or a second time; and accordingly, the apostle Peter uses *αναγενναω* (anagennao), to be born again, in exactly the same sense as our Lord uses *γεννηθη ανωθεν*, when he says—"He hath begotten us again unto a living hope," and "being born again, not of corruptible seed [the seed of flesh] but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth." *

Birth is the beginning of life. Our lower life begins at birth, and so also our higher life begins. The highest conception and aspect of true religion is life, the life of God in the soul of man, life from God and for God. As we cannot live with man without being born of man so we cannot live to God without being born of God. Life from below is life by a literal or fleshly birth; life from above is life by a spiritual or supernatural birth. Life for *an* earthly kingdom begins with an earthly birth; life for the kingdom of heaven begins with a heavenly birth. The two lives never begin together. We come into the world "without strength," without spiritual strength, without the strength of spiritual and divine life. We are by nature "alienated from the life of God:" This language is definite and decisive. Christ "cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world," because the world is without

* 1 Peter i. 3, 23.

life, and the world is without life because it is "without God;" and accordingly Christ says that he is "the life," and that to be without him is to be without life, since "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." The life from which we are naturally alienated, and which Christ, as the life of the world, has come to give us, begins, as he tells Nicodemus, in a second birth, a birth from above, a birth of the Spirit. How else could such life begin? How else but in birth does any life begin? As fleshly life always begins in fleshly birth so spiritual life begins in spiritual birth; and because the spiritual life is immediately of God, it begins in a birth of God. A Christian man is one that is born again to a living hope, the hope that belongs to spiritual life, the living hope that aspires to eternal life in the skies; and his second birth or regeneration is not by the corruptible seed of flesh but by the incorruptible seed of the Spirit. His second birth is not of material blood or by fleshly choice or by any human force, but by the agency and operation of God. He is "born of God," as John says; and "through the gospel" or "belief of the truth," as Paul says. The consequent life corresponds with this commencement.

Every possible sort of religion is either vital or mechanical, the religion of power or the religion of form. By this distinction every variety of religion may be detected and discriminated. Every false religion, every human religion, every superficial and impotent religion is mechanical; but every true, profound, potent, productive religion is vital. And so our Lord calls the beginning of true religion a birth, to denote vitality, to teach us that religion is life, and not mechanism or ritualism; and so we are commanded to turn away from all such as have a form of godliness and deny the power, since the kingdom of God is not in word

but in power. Every religion that really pleases God and profits man is the religion of life; and all such life is love. Christian life is Christian love; divine life is divine love; life from above is love from above; life to God is love to God; to be born of God is to be quickened with love from God, such love as will operate and fructify, first of all towards God, and then towards everything known and lovable under God. So sacred Scripture teaches us. "Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts," or has been poured forth in our hearts, "by the Holy Spirit which was given us."* "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," for love is the life into which we have passed. "He that loveth not abideth in death."† "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." "The end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned." "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "Over all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness." "If a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."‡

Only as incipient life can the beginning of true religion

* Romans v. 5.

† 1 John iii. 14: "his brother," says Alford, is omitted in the three oldest MSS.

‡ 1 John iv. 7, 8; Matthew xxii. 37-40; 1 Timothy i. 5; Romans xiii. 10; Colossians iii. 14; John xiv. 23.

well be likened. It is like the germination of the living seed in the soil, that, with moisture and sunshine, brings forth "first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear." But especially is it like the beginning of all human life, to be followed by all the stages of growth, by all the rich variety of relationship, by all the power of action and achievement, by all the wealth of attainment and conscious possession, by all the diversity and intensity of enjoyment, by all the beauty and utility of purity and culture. We never live till we live to God; and we never live to God till we are born of God. It matters little when and where we were born of earth; it matters everything to be born of heaven. This is our true nativity, from which we should reckon, and for which we should "evermore rejoice."

§ 2. *The inception of new life is a Spiritual cleansing.*

"Nicodemus saith unto him—'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered—'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'" John iii. 4, 5.

Nicodemus the aged asks how an old man could be born. Nicodemus, the formalist and ritualist, with an old man's prejudices and slowness to believe, asks how a man could be literally born a second time of his mother. He ought not to have supposed for a moment that a teacher sent from God, accredited by miracles, could utter such an absurdity. But in fact he had not a glimpse of our Lord's spiritual meaning. Apparently, religion to him was all external; and with everything external he was well acquainted. Through his long life and in his high position,

he had been familiar with the temple and its services. He knew all about the priests and their vestments and duties. He understood all the institutions and observances of Judaism. But of such a thing as an old man or a full-grown man or any human being having a second birth, he had never thought or heard. How does our Lord deal with such a case? How does the greatest of teachers instruct such an objector? By what means does he seek to pour light on such a darkened heart? By what comparisons and words does he explain to such a man his own opening utterance, the great doctrine of a divine birth, the divine beginning of a divine life? His skill as a teacher will appear in his answer to his visitant's objections, and will suggest to every teacher the best method of illustrating the inception of spiritual life.

The answer, in the fifth verse, signifies that by a second or heavenly birth is meant a spiritual cleansing. To be born from above is to be "born of water and the Spirit." What does this mean? The conjunction καί (kai) is sometimes epexegetical or explanatory, having the sense of "even;" and so it is here: "born of water, even the Spirit."* Water, as the great means of cleansing or purifying, is an emblem or symbol of the sanctifying Spirit. As we cleanse our utensils, garments and persons with water, so the Spirit of God cleansing the soul is symbolized by water. He alone can cleanse the soul, and his cleansing is necessary because the soul is naturally unclean. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Who can bring a clean life out of an unclean heart? "Not one."

* "The kingdom of God and (even) his righteousness," Matthew vi. 38. In the following passages καί (and) is rightly rendered "even:" Matthew viii. 27; Matthew xxv. 29; Mark vi. 2; Luke xii. 7; Acts v. 39; Romans v. 7; Hebrews xi. 19.

"Either make the tree good and its fruit will be good, or else make the tree corrupt and its fruit will be corrupt." The ceremonial and legal defilements of Judaism were intended to illustrate and teach the defiling of the soul by sin; and the numerous ablutions of Judaism were intended to illustrate and teach the washing of salvation. God has graciously made ample provision for our purification. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin;" the Spirit, as the sanctifier, is called "Holy;" through "the truth" of the word we are sanctified;* and accordingly a fountain "for sin and for uncleanness" is opened in the house of David. "For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed."† The blood is the life. Religion is life, as its beginning is a birth, the inception of life; and its cleansing is the cleansing of the blood, which is the cleansing of life. The countless multitude before the throne consists of those only who had in this world washed their robes and made them white, or clean, in the blood of the Lamb. Their original cleansing is the birth from above, a birth of the Spirit and water, the great inceptive cleansing.

Scripture is its own and best interpreter; and accordingly we find a parallel expression in the words of the Forerunner: "I indeed baptize you with water, but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire,"‡ even with fire. In this passage, the Spirit and fire are in conjunction ("Spirit and fire"), to denote that they are one, just as in John iii. 5, the Spirit and water are in conjunction ("water and the Spirit,") to denote that they are one. In the former

* John xvii. 17. † Joel iii. 21. ‡ Luke iii. 16.

passage, the Spirit's emblem or symbol is fire ; in the latter water. As in Luke, water is in opposition to the Spirit and fire (I with water, He with the Spirit and fire), to denote that the water is to be taken literally and the fire spiritually, so in John, flesh is in opposition to the Spirit and water (born of the flesh, born of the Spirit and water), to denote that the flesh is to be taken literally and the water spiritually. As John contrasts his water with Christ's Spirit and fire, so Christ contrasts Nicodemus's flesh with his own Spirit and water. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," as you Nicodemus understand it ; "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," as I, the heavenly teacher, inculcate it. The birth that you speak of is simply a birth of flesh, the birth that I speak of is a birth of the Spirit ; and the Spirit that I speak of is a cleansing or purifying Spirit, the Spirit even water, the Spirit that cleanses as by water, the Spirit whose symbol or sign is water, and who engenders, therefore, nothing but what is pure and holy. In Luke, John's baptismal water is in opposition to Christ's baptismal fire, to distinguish the ritual from the spiritual ; in John, Nicodemus's generative flesh is in opposition to Christ's regenerative Spirit, to distinguish the carnal from the spiritual. In John's conjunction of Christ's Spirit and fire, there are not two baptisms, a baptism of the Spirit and a baptism of fire, but one baptism, whose agent is the Spirit and whose sign is fire ; that is, a divine fiery baptism, that searches, penetrates and purifies the soul, as fire is the most searching, penetrating, purifying agency in nature. In Christ's conjunction of the Spirit and water, there are not two births, a birth of the Spirit and a birth of water, but one birth, a second birth, a birth from above, a birth of the Spirit of God, according to the symbol or emblem of water, a birth that purifies the soul,

as water purifies the body. Paul too denotes the purification of a second birth or regeneration, when he tells us that God saved us, according to his mercy, "by the washing of regeneration, even (και) the renewing of the Holy Ghost."* Only by regeneration or a second birth can the soul be washed, and this regeneration is really a renewing, not by any human agency or outward ordinance, but by the Holy Spirit; for "if any man be in Christ," if any man be a Christian, "he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," the new things of a new condition, the new things of a new life, beginning in a divine birth or inceptive cleansing.

In the whole range of biblical interpretation, nothing seems more strange than that even wise and good men should find water baptism in our Lord's explanation of the second birth. To be born of water is not to be baptized; and there is no reason whatever for believing that our Lord has the slightest reference to the baptism of water, while there is abundant reason for believing that such a teacher would not divert his ritualistic hearer from spiritual nativity by any allusion to baptismal water. In all the Bible, baptism is never called a birth, and in the very nature of things cannot be. Birth or generation involves derivation and resemblance. Parent and child are of one nature. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" and that which is born of water is water. Water is the symbol of cleanness, and therefore to be born symbolically of water (but really of the Spirit) is to be clean; but to be born of literal water, either in baptism or out of it, is an impossibility, for water cannot generate. Baptism is in no sense a birth, and the baptism of water does

* Titus iii. 5.

not generate water. But to be born of the Spirit, as if of water, or as of a cleansing agency, or to be born of the Spirit according to the symbolical significance of water, is to be cleansed by the Spirit; and this is precisely what our Lord means to teach. Nicodemus was familiar with Jewish defilements and lustrations, and ought to understand that to be born of water, even the Spirit, could mean nothing else but to be purified by the Spirit. Every man that hears and teaches Christ's words should understand the same. This purification is necessary, for, says Christ, "except a man be born of water, even the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." The kingdom of God here means either heaven or the kingdom on earth that is necessary to heaven, and in either sense this cleansing nativity is necessary to heaven. To say that the birth of water means water-baptism is to say that water-baptism is necessary to heaven; but this the Bible nowhere says. Whatever be the signification or value, the office or use, of water-baptism, it has no such necessity. Multitudes are in heaven that never were baptized with water. It is "he that believeth not" that shall be condemned and excluded from heaven, not he that is without baptism or he that is without both belief and baptism. The men that were baptized with the Holy Ghost, in the house of Cornelius, without water-baptism, were saved; and they were afterwards baptized with water, not to obtain salvation but to signify it and confess it, before men; whereas Simon Magus, though baptized with water, had neither part nor lot in the matter, but was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.

§ 3. *Spiritual purity is the Nature of God in man.*

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."—John iii. 6.

Man was made in the moral image of God, and to restore him to cleanness or holiness is to restore him to the divine likeness or to moral oneness with God. This restoration is always and everywhere a divine achievement. Holiness is invariably the propagation of God, and all holy beings are his children. Fleshly life is the offspring of fleshly parentage, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh ;" and spiritual life is the offspring of spiritual parentage, for "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Parent and child are of one nature. Find out the nature of the parent, and you find out the nature of the child ; find out the nature of the child, and you find out the nature of the parent. If the parent is flesh, the child is flesh ; if the parent is Spirit, the child is spirit. God is the only generating or reproductive Spirit in the universe ; and therefore all spiritual beings are his offspring. God is the only original Holy Spirit in the universe, and all holy beings are his moral offspring. The spirit of man was holy when he was divinely generated or created, and he can be restored to holiness only by being divinely regenerated or re-created. We cannot cleanse ourselves ; we cannot cleanse one another ; no angel or minister or church can cleanse us ; no ordinances or institutions, no ceremonies or sacraments, can cleanse us. It is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, in the water of baptism or otherwise, that makes us clean, but the washing of a second birth, the renewing of the Holy Ghost, to which belongs "the inquiry of a good conscience after

God.* The type, pattern or standard of this purification is the holiness of God himself, not creature purity or conventional excellence. Birth is the inception of life; the new birth is the inception of new life; the birth of the Spirit is the inception of a spiritual and divine life. Holiness in man, holiness in the world, has no other commencement. The holiness that otherwise originates is a false appearance and an empty name; and those that preach it are as resounding brass or a clanging cymbal. Holiness is the reproductive work of God, the purpose of the Father, the image of the Son, the produce of the Spirit. Since no man is or can be self-sanctified, the praise of all holiness belongs to God: "We are his workmanship;" "by grace are ye saved." Holiness in man is the reflection of God's light, the influx of his love, the generation of his grace, the impartation of his nature, the indwelling and influence, the fruit and life, of his blessed Spirit. As soon as we begin to be sanctified, that is, as soon as we are born of God, we are children of God, infants in his family, to grow up in holiness to the strength and stature of manhood. Whoever is born of God is a child of God, and has all the privileges and promises, the immunities and advantages, of his moral offspring. He is a partaker of the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust.† He is under the discipline of the Father, that he may be a partaker, more and more, of his heavenly Father's holiness.‡ That nature or holiness is love, "for God is love" and "love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God."|| The Christian's life henceforth is his heavenly Father's care, to be shielded and sheltered, to be

* 1 Peter iii. 21.—Alford's Revision. † 2 Peter i. 4.

‡ Hebrews xii. 10. || 1 John iv. 7, 8.

nourished and fostered, to be developed and strengthened, to be trained and employed, for the glory of God and the maturity of the skies.

This filial participation of the Divine nature is the highest aspect of religion that is conceivable or possible, and is fitly called godliness. To be a Christian is to be godly or godlike, to be the very offspring of God, to love him and commune with him as Father, to have a name and a place in his family, to be the associate and equal of his many children, to be an heir of himself and a joint-heir with Christ. "Beloved," says the apostle John, with exulting gratitude, "now are we the sons of God." "Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The believer in Jesus Christ is said to be "born" or "begotten" of God; and he is again denoted in the same chapter as "born" or "begotten" of God, to teach us that he is a filial partaker of the divine nature. With such a nature in him, "he keepeth himself" (or "it keepeth him,") "unspotted from the world;" and escaping the world's corruption of lust, he cleanses himself "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," and "perfects holiness in the fear of God."*

* 1 John iii. 2; 1 Peter i. 8; 1 Peter i. 3; 1 John v. 1, 18; 2 Corinthians vii. 1.

§ 4. *Regeneration is a Mysterious certainty.*

"Marvel not that I said unto thee—Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth [where it pleases or where it will], and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit."—John iii. 7, 8.

"The wind blows where it will," that is, according to its own nature ; and so the Spirit of God operates on men as he wills or according to his own supreme and perfect nature ; not arbitrarily, but "according to the good pleasure of his will" and "after the counsel of his will." The good pleasure of his will means benevolence ; and the counsel of his will means wisdom, the wisdom of congruity with his own benevolence and his own work of creation. "The world cannot receive the Holy Spirit" because "it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him," and it neither beholds him nor knows him because it "always resists" him ; but the Father gives the Spirit "to them that obey him" and "to them that ask him." The Spirit may be "grieved" as well as resisted ; he may be "vexed" or "quenched ;" but his "fruit" in all believers is "in all goodness and righteousness and truth."*

The operation of the wind is partly known, for "thou hearest the sound thereof ;" and partly unknown, for "thou canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit." The Spirit's emblem is now the wind, as just before it was the water ; and as the water signifies power to cleanse, the

* Ephesians i. 5, 11 ; John xiv. 17 ; Acts vii. 51 ; Acts v. 32 ; Luke xi. 13 ; Ephesians iv. 30 ; Isaiah 'xiii. 10 ; 1 Thessalonians v. 19 ; Ephesians v. 9.

wind signifies power to communicate. The Spirit comes on us as water, and we are sanctified; he comes on us as wind, and we hear and know "the joyful sound." The Spirit speaks to men in the gospel; and when they hear the sound with faith, they go on their way rejoicing. The Spirit of truth is the great Speaker of the world, the moral wind of the world, and every faithful preacher is his medium and his echo; and "they that hear shall live." His operation is a matter of consciousness to every one that is saved by the hearing of faith, so far as his own spiritual nativity is concerned; and a matter of mystery, so far as the experience or actual salvation of others is concerned. When we are born of God, we know the work of the Spirit, as we hear the wind; but we know not from what other nativities or resistances he has come to us, or to what other nativities or resistances he goes from us. What we hear we know, what others hear or refuse to hear we do not know. Our own spiritual experience we are competent to testify; but of the experience of others we are incompetent to judge.

A child of God can no more be ignorant of his spiritual nativity than of the sound of the wind. This is the rule, which exceptions only serve to prove. "We do know that we know him. . . We know that we are in him. . . The darkness is past and the true light now shineth. . . Ye know the truth. . . Now are we the sons of God. . . We know that we have passed from death unto life. . . We know that we are of the truth. . . We know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us. . . We are of God. . . Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. . . These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of

the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life. . . We know that we are of God. . . And we know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ."* The men that take conviction for conversion, the striving or drawing of the Spirit for his regenerating influence, may well doubt whether they are born again, for they are not; and the more "it gives them anxious thought," the better. As many are called but few chosen, so many are drawn but few renewed.

Spiritual life shines by its own light and evinces itself by its proper power. The Spirit's witness is the Spirit's work, the work of his sunshine, and the work of his sanctity. His coming into the heart is like the sunrise of the world, needing no interpreter and involving no doubt. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God:" "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father."† He is a self-revealing Spirit, whose presence in every believing heart is light, whose fruit in every believing heart is love. As the sun reveals himself by his own light, and demonstrates his power by his fruits, in the field of nature, so the Spirit of God is his own witness, who also demonstrates his power by his fruits, in the field of our new hearts and lives. As the tree is known by its fruit so is the Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance."‡ His first fruit is love. "Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.

* 1 John : *passim*. † Romans viii. 16, and Galatians iv. 6.

‡ Galatians v. 22, 23.

He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. . . . If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. . . . God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. . . . Every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him, also that is begotten of him. . . . We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."*

He that believes on the Son of God has not only the witness in himself, but gives evidence in his life of his new nativity. Faith and love produce their proper fruits among men. "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. . . . Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. . . . By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. . . . We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself [or, it keepeth him], and the wicked one toucheth him not."†

As in the blowing of the wind so in the work of the

* 1 John : *passim*. † 1 John : *passim*.

Spirit, there is mystery as well as certainty: "thou canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth." How could it be otherwise? Nature is so full of mysteries that the solution of one problem is the creation of another. Since Job was baffled and humbled with many a "knowest thou" and "canst thou" and "who has done it," all human research has been illustrating Christ's words to Nicodemus. Much has been learned, and so "thou hearest the sound;" and much has eluded our research, to remind us that we cannot "tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth." If the finite around us and below us be so difficult, what must the infinite be? If thou canst not tell the whence and the whither of the wind, how canst thou by searching find out God, or by thy little analysis and synthesis comprehend the religious relationships of the Eternal Spirit? Religion is in part a mystery, and ever must be. A religion without mystery is a fraud and a fallacy. If I cannot comprehend myself, in whom are combined the dust of earth and the intellect of heaven, the uniformity of mechanism and the multiformity of freedom, how can I comprehend the moral operations of the Most High? If I cannot comprehend the lowliest life, the springing grass, the opening flower, the humming insect, how can I comprehend the life of God in my soul? If I cannot comprehend the Spirit's work in myself, though I hear his voice, how can I comprehend his work in others? Every sound that we hear, every breeze that we feel, may well teach us humility. What has the wind done on its way to us? It may have been "the gentle breath of morn" or the terrible simoom. What is the wind leaving us to do? It may go to urge the freighted ship, to fan the fevered couch, or to desolate the fields of beauty and strew the ocean with wrecks. Let us not pre-

sume to sit in judgment on the spiritual condition of others or determine by appearances. There may be deep emotion and mighty conflicts in some that seem unmoved ; and there may be little life under goodly aspects. But one thing we should never forget : the Spirit operates everywhere, for his emblem is the universal wind. Nothing escapes his penetrating power. Let us take it for granted that every one we know, every one we meet, is convinced and drawn by the Spirit, for he convinces the world ; and let us work and hope accordingly. Wherever we go, the wind blows ; wherever we go, the Spirit works ; let us seek to be his messengers and instruments, to lead men into submission, that they too may know the joyful sound. " Let him as he listeth blow ;" as the gentle zephyr or as " a rushing mighty wind ;" with a " still small voice " or with " the thunder of his power." Let us hear him for ourselves in faith ; and let us speak for him to others with praying love. Let him that heareth " come " and " say come."

§ 5. *The mysterious certainty of regeneration is the Consent of Revelation.*

" Nicodemus answered and said unto him—' How can these things be ? ' Je-us answered and said unto him—' Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things ? ' "—John iii. 9, 10.

When a man has grown old in the profession and official maintenance of a religion that he does not understand, and to whose chief realities he demurs, what is to be done with him ? Just what Jesus did with Nicodemus. Turn him back on his own authorities, and tell him of his inconsistencies. At the sight of incongruity between one aspect of himself and another, between his objections on the one

hand and his acts and authorities on the other, his very self-love may help to lead him from objection to better inquiry, and from doubting to believing. At all events, no other mode of treatment seems open and available. "Art thou a master of Israel, a teacher and ruler of Israel, an authorized expositor and administrator of the laws and principles of Israel, as contained in the Pentateuch, the Prophets and the Psalms, and knowest not these things? For the very things that I tell you are in the sacred writings that you profess to believe, that you glory in believing, that you officially explain and maintain, that, as a member of the grand council, you magnify and minister, for the good of all the people. What is the purport of all the Mosaic illustrations but spiritual cleansing? What is the use of distinguishing between clean and unclean but to teach and promote moral purity, holiness to the Lord? What do all the psalms teach but purity of heart and life, secret conversation with God, a life that springs from him and continually returns to him? What else does the fifty-first psalm teach, when it prays for a clean heart and a right spirit, for washing into more than snowy whiteness, for truth in the inward parts and wisdom in the hidden? What else does the thirty-second psalm mean by a spirit without guile, a spirit compassed with mercy and songs of salvation, an upright or righteous heart that both secretly and openly rejoices in God? What else do the prophets mean by the divine gift of a heart of flesh for a heart of stone, by the cleansing of the heart from all filthiness and idols, by the cleansing of the blood, by the sprinkling of clean water, by the circumcision of the heart for the complete love of God? And is not the mysterious certainty of the Spirit's work denoted in the Scripture of truth? What

else does David mean, when he says—‘Take not thy Holy Spirit from me. . . Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit. . . Thy Spirit is good ; lead me into the land of uprightness. . . Whither shall I go from thy Spirit ?’ A new, spiritual, holy life, beginning with a supernatural nativity, sustained and increased by intercourse with God, is the end and aim, the purport and theme, of all divine revelation. It is common to all the Mosaic writings, to the law, the prophets and the psalms ; it is common to all divine communications, from the testimony that Abel was righteous and that Enoch pleased God to Malachi’s assurance that God hearkens and hears when his servants hold holy converse. It is the consentience of all heavenly oracles, the convergence of all sacred influences. What is all real religion for but to make men new and clean ; what does all real religion mean but a regenerated heart and a holy life ? And what is this but a life beginning in a second and sanctifying birth of the Spirit ? And art thou, Nicodemus, a teacher and ruler of Israel, God’s most highly-favoured people, and knowest not these things ? Art thou a light and a guide in the land of Israel, and knowest not these things ? What hast thou been reading and hearing and judging for so long, till thou art now grown old, if thou hast not learnt the first truths, the foundation facts, the primary lessons, of all holy conversation and godliness ? ”

Such remonstrance and admonition may be addressed with increased force to all the teachers of the Christian Church that understand and inculcate only outward things, or that place inward things on a false foundation, and attempt to deduce them from a wrong beginning. The teachers of baptismal regeneration, of salvation by priestly prescription and absolution, by sacramental institutions and

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forms, by ritualistic observances, are the successors of Nicodemus as he came by night to Jesus ; they are blind leaders of the blind, forgers of errors and fountains of lies, much more guilty and inexcusable than Nicodemus, as they have in their hands the writings of the New Testament in addition to the Old, the conversation of Christ with Nicodemus, the instances and examples of the Acts of the Apostles, and all the comments and illustrations of the apostolical Epistles.

Scarcely less blamable are the members of Churches who practically hold with Nicodemus against their own formularies, and neglect the inspired word of truth. Many pray for the cleansing of the thoughts of their hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that they may perfectly love God and worthily magnify his holy name, who yet know nothing of a divine cleansing, and stoutly deny it. Many pray to be saved from sin, and yet go on in it. Many hear the gospel without receiving it. Sooner or later they must hear the Master saying : Are ye called by my name and know not these things ? They must either hear him now in mercy or at the last in "judgment without mercy."

§ 6. *The consent of Revelation is Christ's own testimony.*

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee—We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen ; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things ? And no man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man [which is in heaven.]"*—John iii. 11, 12, 13.

* Textual criticism (that is, comparison of the best manuscripts, ancient versions and quotations) determines that the words "which is in heaven" (v. 13,) are no part of the text. See Drs. Milligan & Roberts on "The words of the New Testament : " Edinburgh, 1873.

- What all the Scriptures, with one consent, declare is what Christ himself now testifies. The great Personage, to whom all times pointed, for whom all times prepared, and whom all the nations desired, is now in the world, expounding and inculcating the new life, testifying the nature and necessity of the new birth, particularly to his nocturnal visitant. The supernatural inception of a new and holy life now rests on the latest and highest authority, for "the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding." Christ testifies nothing by report or at second hand, but only what he himself really knows, what he himself has seen. This language implies his divinity, as when he declared that Abraham had seen his day with gladness.
- All that he had seen and known as man was utterly insufficient to determine the character of all the entrants into the kingdom of God ; but as God, he was the lawgiver and Lord of that kingdom and knew all about it, and now what he knows he makes known. He speaks with authority, and not as the Scribes. He alone, in all the world, knows the final kingdom of heaven, prepared from the foundation of the world, into which, at the final judgment, the righteous shall enter, by the invitation of the Judge himself, the very Son of man with whom Nicodemus now converses. To that kingdom no man has yet ascended or can ascend till the judgment. Even David is not yet ascended to those final heavens ; and their crown, the crown of righteousness, was not expected by Paul before "that day," the final day of inquiry and award. The heaven where Christ now is, and where all his disembodied saints are also, between death and the judgment, is not the heaven that judgment will award, but "the third heaven," the mediatorial heaven. Christ as God is in the highest and final heaven, for he came down from it ; but Christ, as

Mediator between God and man, is in the kingdom of redemptive grace and truth, "the heavenly places" of the Father's right hand and of intermediate blessedness. "In my Father's house," he says, "are many mansions;" and one great purpose of his departure from this world was to prepare an intermediate place in that house, for his disciples, between death and the judgment. The final heaven needed no preparation, for it was prepared of old, "from the foundation of the world;" but an intermediate place was needed, now that God was manifest in the flesh and his own were to be collected with him; and this place is prepared by the departed Son of God. Paul was caught up into this place, but not into the heaven of final reward; for "no man hath ascended up to [this] heaven but he that came down from heaven, the Son of man." It is customary in the Scriptures to speak of things under lower or earlier names, the names already known, till the time comes to speak of them more fully under their higher and final names. Under Judaism, for instance, the name of Christ was the Son of David, the name of his harbinger was Elijah, and the name of his church and kingdom was Judah, Jerusalem, Mount Zion. And so the name of the God-man is to Nicodemus "the Son of man," till the time comes, farther on in the conversation, to speak of himself more eminently as "the Son of God," "the only-begotten Son." But though he first speaks of himself under the lower name, he plainly implies his higher nature. It was not as man, but as God, he came down from heaven; it was not as man, but as God, he knew and had seen whatever pertains to the highest and final heaven; and when Nicodemus persists in his prejudice and incredulity, our Lord brings to bear upon him his highest argument, his final influence, the very competence and authority that Nicode-

mus had partly recognized at the outset. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee we speak that we do know and testify that we have seen, as freely ascending to heaven and coming down from it, and therefore perfectly familiar with it."

What does our Lord mean by the distinction between "earthly things" and "heavenly things?" He has been telling Nicodemus the things of the new birth only: why does he call them earthly? The usual answer is that the new birth is an earthly thing because it takes place on the earth. Is this answer satisfactory? Does the place or time of an occurrence determine its nature? Is everything earthly and not heavenly that takes place on the earth? Divine manifestations and communications were surely not earthly because they took place on the earth. The incarnation of the Son of God was not on this account earthly, or the descent of the Spirit on Christ at his baptism, or on men at Pentecost. The kingdom of heaven is not earthly because it comes to men on the earth. The life of a Christian man, though it takes place on the earth, is not earthly, for "our country is in the heavens,"* and God "hath raised us up together with Christ, and made us sit together with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."† If our new life is heavenly, how can the birth that begins it be earthly? How can a birth "from above" be earthly? How can a birth of the Spirit of God be earthly? Surely some better reason must be found for calling the things of the new birth "earthly" than the occurrence of the new birth on the earth.

Since the distinction of earthly things and heavenly cannot be taken literally, it must be taken figuratively; and in its own chapter, the third of John, we have a clue to its

* Phil. iii. 20. † Eph. ii. 6.

meaning. In answer to his own disciples, John the Baptist contrasts himself with Christ. Christ is the bridegroom, John is the bridegroom's friend. Christ must increase, John must decrease. Christ comes from above, and is above all; John is of the earth, earthly, and speaketh of the earth.* Comparing Judaism and Christianity, the former is earthly, the latter heavenly. They are so compared in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The things of Christianity are "things in the heavens," "good things to come;" their Jewish "patterns" were "things of earth," things of "a worldly sanctuary," "things ordained," "carnal ordinances," "things purged with blood;" and accordingly we find "the patterns," that is, the patterns on earth, of things in the heavens, distinguished from "the heavenly things themselves," that is, we find earthly things distinguished from heavenly things, as Christ distinguishes them to Nicodemus. The Baptist is "of the earth, earthly," because he belongs to the earthly or inferior economy of Judaism, and "speaketh of the earth," to "decrease;" but Jesus "coming from above," or "coming down from heaven," is "above all," to "increase." His words and his harbinger's should be compared. He says of himself to Nicodemus—"We speak that we do know and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our testimony;" John says of him—"What he hath seen and heard he testifieth, and no man receiveth his testimony." Jesus says of himself to Nicodemus—"The Son of Man came down from heaven;" John says of him—"He that cometh from above," "he that cometh from heaven," is "above all." The parallelism of our Lord's words and John's is too clear and specific to be doubted, and makes "the earth" of the

* John iii. 25, &c.

latter explanatory of the "earthly things" of the former, and the latter's phrase, "from heaven" or "above all," explanatory of the former's phrase, "heavenly things." So also our Lord contrasts the Jews, as "from beneath" and "of this world," with himself, as "from above" and "not of this world."* When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus of a supernatural birth, he spoke of what really belonged to Judaism, in common with every era and revelation; and if Nicodemus could not believe the teaching of his own Scriptures and his own times, how should he believe if Jesus told him of the things of later and higher revelation and of the fulness of time, the "heavenly things" of the kingdom of heaven, not yet come but "at hand?" If he could not believe the things of Sinai, how should he believe the things of Sion? If Jerusalem the earthly, with its symbolical purification and supernatural light, was incredible, what would Jerusalem the heavenly be, what would the latter day glory be, with its fulness of truth, its Pentecostal power, its unveiled vision, its equality of Jews and Gentiles, its freedom from Jewish yokes, its inheritance of the world? In all this contrast, one very important thing is clear, that the spiritual nativity of a new and holy life is neither a Christian nor a Jewish peculiarity, but the consensus of all revelations and dispensations. It is not the Gentile only or the Jew only, but "man" that needs to be born again. All doubt respecting it should now forever cease, for he that came from heaven and ascends to heaven tells us of a divine nature in man, by a spiritual and divinely-cleansing birth, that, however mysterious in others, is as certain as the sound of the wind to every one that is begotten of God.

* John viii. 12.

§ 7. *What Christ himself now testifies is Absolutely necessary.*

Something but not everything in religion is necessary. To say that nothing in religion is necessary is to say that religion itself is not necessary ; and if religion is not necessary, what is necessary ? Religion is relationship with God ; true religion is right relationship with God ; and is not this necessary ? If it is not necessary to be rightly related to the Supreme Being, it is not necessary to be right with any subordinate being ; if it is not necessary to be right with the Infinite and the Eternal, what matters it whether we are right or wrong with every finite and temporary being ; if it is not necessary to be right with the Maker and Monarch of the universe, we need give no heed to any other or lower relationship, domestic, conventional or civil. Is nothing then essential ? Reason and conscience recoil from such latitudinarianism and confusion, and compel us to recognize the necessity of something in religion. Is that something everything ? If it is, there is no room in religion for human imperfection, no allowance for conscientious differences, no tolerance for honest misapprehension, no distinction in law or gospel between lighter and weightier matters, between jo's and tittles, or letters and strokes, and the body of the truth. Reason and conscience recoil from such impracticable bigotry. We dare not make necessary what God has not made necessary, for he is the only competent ordainer and judge of religious necessity ; and we dare not make circumstantial what he has made essential. It is for him to say what is or is not essential to himself ; and it is for us to say it only in

rehearsal. According, then, to the Master himself in this conversation, WHAT IS NECESSARY IN RELIGION IS THE DIVINE BIRTH THAT BEGINS IT. To end well we must begin well ; to be well we must become well ; to walk aright with God, we must become right, according to his word ; to live we must be born ; to live to God, we must be born of God ; to be holy before him, we must be inceptively cleansed. Thrice, and with the utmost explicitness, solemnity and emphasis, our Lord declares what is necessary for the kingdom of God. First of all, he says :—" Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man [any man] be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Seeing is knowing, personally and experimentally, for one's self. So the Greek word (*σίδω*), occurring here, signifies, throughout the New Testament, where it abounds. " Jesus answered—' Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' " We cannot know the kingdom of God without belonging to it ; and we cannot belong to it, without entering it. The kingdom of God is not something into which a man is *born* but which he *enters*, and for entrance into which he must be spiritually born. The birth and the entrance are not coincident ; the birth precedes the entrance ; the birth is necessary to the entrance. Knowing and entering practically coincide, but not birth and entrance. The birth is here, the entrance is hereafter ; and the kingdom, as thus distinguished, must mean the ultimate and retributive kingdom of God, the heaven from which Christ came and to which, as God, he ascends. In this world, the kingdom of God, as grace, comes to us ; in the next world we shall come to it and enter it, as glory ; and accordingly, it will be found, on a careful examination,

that entrance into the kingdom of God, in the New Testament, points to the futurity and finality of the kingdom.*

Our Lord plainly teaches Nicodemus that the new birth is necessary to heaven, that none shall enter heaven without it. "Except a man," any man, Jew or Gentile, "be born again, born from above, born of water and the Spirit, he cannot know, he cannot enter," he cannot belong to, this highest and latest kingdom of God, the kingdom of collected mediatorial results and final judicial awards. "Marvel not," he says, asserting the necessity for the third time, "that I said unto thee ye must be born again." Wonder not at the reiterated necessity of the new birth. Nativity is necessary to life, and life is necessary to heaven. The kingdom of God is not the kingdom of the dead but of the living. It consists of all the members of God's family, gathered into one. There can never be any one in heaven but God and his holy children. God is the Father-king, and all else in heaven are his subject-sons. His eldest sons that never sinned will be there; his younger sons will be there, whom his grace saves by a spiritual nativity and a new life; and no others can be there. The dead can never be found there, or the alien, or the outcast. We are spiritually born into the kingdom of grace here, into the family of God now; and we hope, in consequence, to enter into the kingdom of glory hereafter. This is the only process in the ordination of God and in the nature of things. Nativity in the kingdom of grace is necessary to entrance into the kingdom of glory. "The holy to the holiest leads," as the holy place, in the Jewish temple, led to the holiest of all.

* Matt. v. 20; Matt. vii. 21; Matt. xviii. 3; Matt. xix. 23, 24; Mark ix. 47; Mark x. 23-25; Acts xiv. 22; 2 Peter i. 10, 11.

This necessity holds good in religion, under every aspect and illustration. True religion is love, the Christian's responsive filial love to God and consequent fraternal love to his people. This love lives and reigns among the members of the divine family in earth and heaven. No man belongs to this family or can have the love of it till he is born into it. As soon as our new life in this family begins, our love in it begins, for then the love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us. The one thing essential in this family is love, the life of love. "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. . . Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. . . He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. . . He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. . . We love him because he first loved us." "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing."* Prophecies, tongues and knowledge shall disappear, but "love never faileth." Other things are partial, love is perfection. Of the three that "abide," love is "the greatest." There is no Christian union without it, for it is "the perfect bond." There is no obedience to God without it, for it is "the fulfilling of the law." There is no likeness to God without it, for "God is love." It is the only antagonism and cure of selfishness,

* 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3,

for "love is kind;" it is the mighty motive of Christian enterprise and heroism; it is the way to heaven, and heaven itself, where, in the perfection of love, we shall have face-to-face acquaintance, and "know as we are known."

It is properly the commencement of the life of true religion that is denoted and urged in the first part of this conversation. Other aspects of this life come out as the Master proceeds. The highest life begins with BIRTH, a birth from above. Such a birth is a PURIFICATION, not of the body but of the soul, not ritual but real, not of man but of God. Such a purification is a divine PROPAGATION OR REGENERATION, the participation by man of God's moral nature or excellence, especially the excellence of love. In such a participation, there is the CERTAINTY of a consciousness which the Spirit creates by the sunshine of his presence and the sanctity of his produce, but with the mystery that is inseparable from everything vital and divine. This nativity from heaven is COMMON to all real revelation and all authentic religion, and is symbolized in the Jewish law, sought and experienced in the psalms, illustrated and exalted in the prophets. Now, however, it has the SPECIALTY of Messianic testimony, that places it, to the true disciple, beyond controversy and doubt. This testimony also thoroughly establishes among men the NECESSITY of this supernatural birth; for without it there can be no place for man in the family of God, and no place, at the last, in that kingdom of heaven that shall comprise and crown all the children of the Highest in glory everlasting. This necessity is the necessity of holiness for the presence of the Most Holy, the necessity of purification for the unclean, the necessity of commencement to conclusion, the

necessity of birth to life, the necessity of man's divine regeneration to his divine sonship, the necessity in which all revelations concur, and which the Revealer himself now specially testifies. What Christ testifies of heaven is what he knows and has seen; for though, as man, he was born of man, he is infinitely higher. The heaven that he came to people and prepare for is the very heaven from which he descended and to which he alone ascends. Whatever belongs to it he knows; and no man can eventually ascend to it, except in conformity with his teaching and testimony, by the belief of himself as the Light and Life of men, by his regenerating Spirit, that cleanses like the water, and communicates and vivifies like the universal wind.

CHAPTER II.

NEW LIFE IS THE FRUIT OF DEATH.

§ 1. *The Death that gives life.*

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." John iii. 14.

FROM the nature of the highest life, we naturally pass to its origin or cause. How is such life to be accounted for? How is it that man can be made a partaker of the divine nature, a member of the heavenly family, an ultimate inheritor of the kingdom of God? The second part of the conversation is the answer, in the form of a comparison between the means of life to the serpent-bitten Israelites, in the wilderness, and the means of life to all mankind. Let us fairly set before us the things compared.

"And the people spake against God and against Moses—'Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread.' And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses and said—'We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against thee; pray unto the LORD that he take away the serpents from us.' And Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said unto Moses—'Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.' And Moses made a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived."*

What does the lifting up of the Son of Man mean? "Then said Jesus unto them—'When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am *he* and *that* I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.'"+ "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me.' This he said, signifying what death he should die."† Jesus was lifted up on the cross to die, for the life of every one that believes in him and for the attraction of the world to himself. To the Israelite in the wilderness, the likeness of the means of death was the means of life; by a serpent he was mortally wounded, and by the sight of the serpent-form he was healed: to man, in this world, the means of deliverance is the death of the deliverer. The serpent on

* Numbers xxi. 5-9. † John viii, 28. ‡ John xii. 31-33.

the pole was the serpent captured, the enemy dead, and lifted up to be generally visible, and therefore an expressive sign of salvation from the enemy's poison and power : Christ on the cross is the public exhibition of sure deliverance from the poison and power of sin. Our redemption involves a contest between the serpent and the Saviour ; the triumphant *result* of the contest is illustrated by the captured foe on a pole, and the painful *means* of the conquest is signified by the conqueror himself on the pole of the cross. Our Lord's comparison involves both a resemblance and a contrast. The resemblance lies in the ultimate result, life to the dying, in the simple means of that result, regard to an appointed object, and in the publicity of that object ; the contrast lies between the elevated foe and the elevated victor, between the sight of the Destroyer and the sight of the Saviour, for salvation. But the grand truth of the comparison is that the death of the Son of Man is the appointed and provided means of life to mankind.

This truth pervades the Bible. To Abel, believing God and offering a slaughtered lamb, God vouchsafed acceptance with witness of righteousness ; while Cain, with a mere thank-offering, was rejected. The offending Israelite, under the law, brought his bleeding sacrifice, and was forgiven. And now, whoever accepts the provided and published sacrifice of Christ shall not perish but have everlasting life. Our Lord does not say that the Son of Man was born for salvation by believing in him, or that he lived and ministered for salvation by believing in him ; but he goes farther, he tells much more, by saying that he must be lifted up, "signifying what death he should die," for our life by believing. "The hour is come," said Jesus on another occasion, "that the Son of Man should be glorified.

Verily, verily, I say unto you except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."* Christ is that corn of wheat who came from heaven to earth, to suffer and die, that by dying he might multiply his life into a glorious golden harvest of ransomed and regenerated souls. "For when we were yet without strength," the strength of spiritual health and life, when we were "without God" or as it is immediately expressed "ungodly," or "while we were yet sinners," Christ died for us, so as that "being now justified by his blood," by the loss of his life or by his death, "we shall be saved from wrath through him," being "reconciled to God by the death of his Son."† "In that he died, he died unto sin once."‡ "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."§ "Our Lord Jesus Christ died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with him."|| "Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself"; "he was once offered to bear the sins of many."¶ "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed."** What comment do such words require? What controversy do such words admit?

As there is mystery in life so also is there mystery in the means of life. Salvation has always two aspects, the aspect of its origin and the aspect of its operation, its aspect towards God from whom it comes and its aspect towards man to whom it comes. In its first aspect, it is necessarily incomprehensible because everything divine is incomprehen-

* John xii. 23, 24.

† Romans v. 6-10.

‡ Romans vi. 10.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 3.

|| 1 Thess. v. 9, 10.

¶ Hebrews ix. 26, 28.

** 1 Peter ii. 24.

sible. "Who by searching can find out God?" How shall the finite comprehend the Infinite? How can we analyze and grasp the counsels and conduct of the Infinite and the Eternal? Salvation is the wisdom of God, the heart of God, the way and work of God; and as such is past finding out. We have no plummet to fathom the depths of divinity, no scales to weigh the infinite; and when we attempt to discern the philosophy of God with us, God manifest in flesh, God redeeming us to himself by himself, God within us, we are baffled and confounded. No wonder that the salvation of man by the atonement of the Son of God has occasioned endless diversity, confusion and contradiction to philosophizing mortals. Every attempt to go beyond revealed facts and forms, in studying the Godward aspect of salvation, must end in mist and darkness, perplexity and error. But its manward aspect is particularly for man's apprehension and use. What salvation is in itself, what salvation is for us, though hidden from the wise and prudent, is revealed to babes. It belongs to us, and we should examine and understand it. Christ himself made it known to Nicodemus, and through him to us all, that we may become wise unto salvation.

§ 2 *The Life that springs from death.*

"That whosoever believeth in him SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE." John iii. 15.

What is the life that comes to man by the death of Christ? It is life instead of death; it is everlasting life instead of perdition; according to the words—"should not perish but have eternal life." In contrast with perdition, this life means *safety*. There may be existence without

safety, but not life, not high and noble life. To be in constant peril, to be under perpetual menace, to be always shrinking on the precipice from the dismal gulfs below, to be threatened every moment with the law's last penalty, is not life, but a wretched and precarious existence. Just so it is with man in sin. We are all in danger, for we are all sinners, and the wages of sin is death. "Every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." "The end of these [shameful] things is death." "The soul that sinneth shall die." This death is not the death of the body, for that is appointed to all men, to many infants as well as adults, to believers and unbelievers, saved and unsaved; but it is the second death, the lake of fire, the destruction of both soul and body in hell, everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from his glorious power. This is the curse of the law, the wages of sin, the terrible reward of persistent ungodliness. Every man is in danger of this till he obtains the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. We are in the greatest peril, whether we think of it or not, whether or not we give heed to it. When we wake in the morning, while we labour through the day, when we return at even, while we slumber through the night, we are exposed to the wrath of God, on account of our persistence in trespasses and sins, on account of neglecting salvation and the Saviour. But as soon as we believe in Christ, the danger ceases. Whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have the safety as well as the sanctity of "eternal life." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "He that believeth is not condemned." "He that believeth is justified from all things." "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is

in Christ Jesus." "We conclude that a man is justified by faith without deeds of law." "To him that worketh not," to him that in the sight of God, or towards God, never did one good deed in his life, "but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." This is indeed glad tidings of great joy to the guilty and condemned, the helpless and the perishing. Believing in Christ, we are pardoned and have peace with God. Believing in Christ, we are reconciled to Him whom we have long and greatly offended. Believing in Christ, we are lifted out of the horrible pit and miry clay to the everlasting rock, to sing the everlasting song of redeeming grace. Believing in Christ, we are hidden in God's secret place, and sheltered in his pavilion. Who shall lay anything to our charge, since God himself justifies us? Who shall condemn us, seeing Christ, who is ours by faith, has died and risen for us, and reigns and intercedes for us? We were ready to perish, but now we are "safe from all impending harms." Jesus lifted up for us is "the Lord our righteousness;" and in his book of life in heaven, our names are written.

Everlasting life is more than a negation, more than the absence of danger; it is something positive and perpetual, worthy of its Lord and Giver, worthy of the death that procures it, correspondent in dignity and value to the safety of absolving and accepting grace. It is union with God, as the life of the body is union with the soul, for "he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." It is communion with God, for "our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." This life is the likeness of God, the vitality of his love in the heart of man, a participation on earth of his own nature. It is the happiness of holiness, the joy of victory, the pleasure of heavenly hope, the bless-

ness of heaven itself begun below. It is not only existence in safety but existence in sunshine ; it is not only the absence of danger but the presence of Jesus ; it is not only the removal of curse but the fulness of blessing ; it is not only a pacified conscience but a purified heart ; it is not only a legal absolution but a gracious adoption, not only a shelter from every storm and a shield in every conflict but a share in every benefit that our hearts can hold and our Father's promises comprehend. It is growth from spiritual maturity to the fulness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus, and thence to the fellowship and full felicity of the skies.

§ 3 *The Faith that finds life.*

“ Whosoever believeth in him.”

Since it is “ whosoever believeth ” in the Son of Man that shall not perish but have eternal life, it is necessary we should know what believing means. This is the more necessary as it is not any and every believing that finds life. We need not quote here that the devils believe and tremble, for their case is not ours. It is not the angelic race (as Heb. ii. 16, declares) that Jesus helps, but the human race of Abrahamic faith ; and therefore between angels, fallen and unfallen, and ourselves, there is no parallel. But we know that “ Simon himself believed ” without obtaining salvation, for he remained in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, without part or lot in the matter. King Agrippa believed the prophets but scorned to become a Christian.* Salvation is through faith, but there is a faith

* “ Then Agrippa said unto Paul—‘ Slightly dost thou persuade me to be a christian.’ And Paul said—‘ I would to God that not only slightly but largely, not only thou but also all that hear me this

that is "dead in itself," there is a faith that is "idle," there is a faith that is not unto salvation.*

The faith that finds life is the faith of the repentant, or faith after repentance. It is never once, in all the Bible, placed in a different connection. Repentance and faith occur in only one order. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel;" "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." The faith of Simon Magus was of no avail because it was without repentance, and accordingly Peter says to him—"Repent and pray," repent of sin and pray in faith, "repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee."† The faith that is "unto righteousness" or that "justifies," whose possessor is "saved" or "born of God," and therefore "shall never thirst" or "die" but "hath everlasting life," is the end of repentance; or, in other words, repentance towards God is both the antecedent and the means of faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. "John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen *it*, repented not afterward that ye might believe him," repented not in order that ye might believe him, repented not as the means of believing.‡

The faith that finds life is faith in Christ. "Ye believe in God," says our Lord to his disciples, "believe also in me."§ Many believe in God but not in Christ. Every Deist so believes; so does every Mohammedan, every Jew, every man who, though called a Christian, disbelieves the day might become such as I am, except these bonds.'"—Acts xxvi. 28, 29, revised.

* Epist'le of James.

† Acts viii. 22.

‡ Matt. xxi. 32.

§ John xiv. 1.

personal nature and the redemptive work of our Lord and Saviour, and disobeys him. Both repentance from dead works and faith in God belong to the foundation of personal religion, which we are not to lay again but leave for Christian progress ; but faith in Christ is not like these, for by it we begin to live and continue to live, going on to perfection ; and in it is merged the earlier belief in God, since to believe in Christ is to believe in God. Christ describes his own disciples as " little ones that believe in me," that is, continuously " believe in me." The gospel that we are called to believe is " the gospel of God concerning his Son ;" which is sometimes called the gospel of God, or the gospel of the grace of God, or the gospel of the Son of God, or the gospel of Christ. Preaching the gospel and preaching Christ are equivalent expressions ; and believing the gospel and believing in Christ are equivalent also. Believing in Christ is the frequent and standing phrase for saving faith. When unrepenting Simon asks a share in Christian things, Peter bids him repent ; when the repentant jailor in Philippi asks what he must do to be saved, Paul bids him believe in the Lord Jesus. Our teaching and preaching should be regulated by these authoritative examples. We are not to bid the repentant sinner believe in God, for he has done so already, his repentance towards God involves faith in God ; but we are to bid him believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the gospel. We are not to bid the unrepenting sinner believe in Christ, but repent of his wickedness. Faith in Christ without repentance is an empty and delusive sound. The foundation cannot be laid without " repentance from dead works ;" and on the true foundation we are to build by faith in Christ, till the top-stone is brought forth, amid the acclaim of " grace."

But how, it may be asked, can a man repent without any faith? He cannot. To repent towards God, we must first believe in God, since repentance towards God is compliance with his command to all men everywhere to repent. We cannot repent towards One whose existence we deny or whose communications we disbelieve. As we cannot repent towards God without believing in him, so we cannot savingly believe in Christ without repentance towards God. **FAITH IN GOD PRECEDES REPENTANCE, FAITH IN CHRIST FOLLOWS**: this is the key to all the difficulties of the connection between repentance and faith. Subjectively considered, (that is, considering only ourselves believing), the faith that finds life is the faith of the repentant; objectively considered, (that is, considering only the object of believing) life-finding faith is faith in Christ. This faith may always be known by its antecedent, its object, and its issue. Its antecedent is repentance, its object is Christ, its issue is love. As soon as we repent of our dead works, the works of spiritual death, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are saved, we are justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus and renewed in the spirit of our minds; and then, at once, this faith in Christ begins to evince itself in love to God and love to man and in the new obedience and service of a loving heart. We are not justified on account of the fruit of faith, or with any regard to the fruit of faith, but on account of the object that faith accepts, which is "the Lord our righteousness," and we are justified as soon as we believe. What follows faith is no ground or reason of justification. We are now justified by faith without deeds of law or deeds of love. Considering only salvation itself, as consisting of justification and regeneration, the faith that finds life is

distinguished only by its antecedent and its object, by the eubjectivity of repentance and the objectivity of the Saviour ; but considering both salvation and its issues, both the inception of spiritual life and its development, the faith that finds life may be said to be distinguished by its antecedent, object and operation.

Incipient faith is not the fruit of life, but the root ; not the result of life, but the means. Salvation means life, which is not for faith, but from or through faith. "Ye are saved through faith." It is the ungodly that are justified, it is the ungodly that begin to believe. Conviction is not conversion, conviction is not life ; and yet everywhere, in the New Testament, it is convinced sinners that are called to believe in Christ. As faith is the end of repentance, or repentance the means of faith, so salvation is the end of faith or faith the means of salvation : "receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." We are not born again that we may begin to believe, but we believe to be born again. "As many as received Christ, to them gave he power [or privilege] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name ; which [receivers or believers] were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* We become children of God by being born of God ; and the power or privilege of being born into the family of God is given to those only that receive Christ ; and to receive Christ is to believe in his name. Believing precedes nativity as means precede ends. There may be some, however, that use the word regeneration in a peculiar and erroneous sense, to signify the antecedent of salvation or the Spirit's preparation for it, just as there are some who use the words "baptismal

* John i. 12, 13.

regeneration" in a peculiar and erroneous sense. In this case, the error may lie in the misuse of words more than in the misapprehension of things. It is very true that no man can believe in Christ for salvation and eternal life without being convinced of sin by the Spirit of Christ, and repenting of sin toward God ; and if by regeneration be meant this conviction and repentance, then it is unquestionably true that regeneration precedes faith in Christ. But the word regeneration ought not to be so used. As generation is the beginning of our first or fleshly life, so regeneration is the beginning of our second or spiritual life. Regeneration is not the antecedent or preparation of life, but the inception ; it is a chief part of salvation, the concomitant of justification ; the life is love ; and as love does not work by faith but faith by love, it is evident that faith in Christ is the antecedent and means of incipient life in Christ. "The just by faith shall live."

This faith invariably finds life, for "whosoever" believes shall not perish but have everlasting life. No one ever yet repentingly believed in Christ without being saved ; no one ever can ; for God is faithful who has promised life to the believer. A man may say he has faith and have none ; a man may seem to have faith and have none ; a man may think he has faith and have none, for many men deceive themselves ; but no repenting sinner that believes in Christ according to the gospel can be unsafe or unregenerate. He has life, for whosoever believes in the Son of God has life. There can be no failure for salvation in really believing in Christ. Other things may fail, but this faith cannot fail. It lays hold on life ; it receives life, for it receives the privilege of the nativity of life ; it produces life, the life of loving obedience to God and loving service to man.

The promise of eternal life is to persevering faith, as the threat of eternal death is to persevering unbelief. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life ; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." * As " he that believeth not " means he that believes not to the end of probation, so " he that believeth " means he that believes to the end of probation ; as " the wrath of God abideth " means that the wrath of God shall abide, so " hath everlasting life " means shall have everlasting life, or as Christ elsewhere says—" in the world to come eternal life." † Disbelieving once does not determine eternal death, and believing once does not determine eternal life. It is he that endures to the end that shall be forever saved. " Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Christ's very manner of denoting his coming decease corresponds with the function of faith. He was " lifted up " that he might be seen of many and testified to all. In order to save the world, Christ must not only die for the world but also be " believed on in the world ; " to be believed on in the world, he must be testified to the world ; and to be appropriately and successfully testified to the world, his death must be as public as possible, witnessed by so many and in such circumstances that there could be no dispute or diversity of opinion in relation to the fact. He must not die " in a corner " or in the seclusion of the garden, but in the sight of the city. The lifting up of Christ means the publicity of his death, as the lifting up of the serpent means the publicity of the remedy for the serpent's sting. Christ was lifted up on the cross that Jew and Gentle might see him, and the great event of his death be thoroughly testifiable.

* John iii. 36. † Mark x. 39.

"This thing was not done in a corner." So Christ himself denotes it: "even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;" but why? "That whosoever *believeth* in him," who was made thus public and proclaimable, "should not perish but have eternal life."

CHAPTER III.

FRUITFUL DEATH IS THE GIFT OF LOVE.

§ 1. *The love of God to man is Parental in its Nature.*

"FOR GOD [THE FATHER] SO LOVED the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."—John iii. 16.

WE are saved, on believing, from the danger of perdition; but what do we believe? The third part of the conversation is the answer. We believe that "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Who can doubt the fact of God's love? The Bible is full of it; the New Testament demonstrates it. Love is the nature of God, his production and his claim. It is his nature, his chief attribute and aspect, for "God is love." It is his production, his offspring, his influence and issue, throughout the universe, for "love is of God," as the heat from the sun and as streamlets from fountains. It is the claim of God, the spirit and principle of the worship he is entitled to and seeks, and of the service he demands, for he

is "the God of love." This form of expression, by which God is said to belong somehow to some person or thing, occurs about fifty times in the New Testament. God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, of the Jews, of the Gentiles, of the holy prophets, of the living, of our Lord; that is, he is the God of all the *persons* that submit to him and live to him, according to his will; and he is the God of love, of all grace, of peace, of hope, of all comfort, of patience, of glory, that is, of all the *personal things* that he both generates and claims. He is the God of all spiritual personality and excellence, as his offspring and property, illustrative of his character and comprehended in his demand. He is the God of love, because love is the spirit, the soul or life, of the worship and service that he requires, as well as the very radiation and resemblance of his own moral nature.

God loves us; but how or in what sense does he love us? There are many sorts of love in the world. There is the love of country that we call patriotism, the love of that inner but undefined circle that we call friendship, and the various sorts of domestic love—marital, parental, filial and fraternal. What sort of love is God's? It is not the love of an enemy that relents towards us, or the love of a stranger that has compassion on us, but the love of a father. This is its name and nature. This its essential and fundamental conception. Unless we seize this and judge by it, we stumble at the threshold and err throughout, in our study of God's love. God is not a tyrant, thinking only of his rights and relentlessly enforcing them. He is not a grim king, brandishing his sword, hurling his spear, launching his arrows, swinging his mace, cutting down his foes, and trampling them in the dust. We should not think of God

as a frowning and fearful monarch, but as a father. Our Lord teaches us to look up to him and say—"Our Father in heaven." Paul among the Athenians approvingly quotes the saying of their own poet, Aratus, that we are the offspring of God. If we are his offspring, he is our parent, and we are his children, "made after the similitude of God." Our lineage is traceable to Adam, "which was the son of God." God is our father, for he is the father of the spirits of all flesh. He has a father's authority as well as affection, and is therefore our paternal ruler. He is a king, but he is a fatherly king or a kingly father. His government is true and proper government, the real caretaking or curatorship of his own property and offspring. He is our father in fact and not in fancy; and he watches over us with a father's eye that never sleeps, a father's hand that never closes, a father's heart that never chills. He pities us, as a father pities his children; he clings to us, as a mother to her babe. There is no love in the world like parental love; none so strong, so deep, so true, so pure, so lasting; and such is God's love to us. We belong to the highest class of creation. The vast variety of divine workmanship constitutes but two classes, the moral and the physical, or children and servants. All that are made in God's likeness are his children; all else are his servants. He has angelic children and human children, and we know of no other. Everything else in his dominion is his servant and theirs. Every mineral, vegetable and animal of our globe, in their endless diversity; every planetary mass, every central sun, every system of worlds, and all the magnificence of the material and non-moral universe; these all form the plenteous service of our Father and his children, for whom and for whom alone, they wheel and shoot and shine, throughout the depths of space. They are for the family but not of it. It is ours to be in

the family itself, to belong to the innermost circle of creation, to be the similitude and sons of God, to be his peculiar love and his constant care. . . Whatever he says to us, he says as our Father ; whatever he does to us, he does as our Father ; all his relations and ways to us are comprehended in the parental. As our Father, he preserves us in life and daily loads us with his benefits ; as our Father, he has ransomed us ; as our Father, he seeks to recover us, and on our submission, receives and reinstates us ; as our Father, he reigns over us, on either side the grave ; and as our Father, he will call us to account and award us our final and appropriate portion. Paternal royalty is his ; filial loyalty is ours.

§ 2 *The love of God to man is Benignant in its Ends.*

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE."—John iii. 16.

"LOVE is kind," and kindness is *prospicient* as well as practical. Kindness is intentional and determinate regard, or decisive and prospective regard, to the loved one's welfare. There can be no love without kindness ; and there can be no true and proper kindness without kind designs or aims. Loving kindness, first of all, makes another's welfare its end, and then works for that end by appropriate means. It does not stumble on beneficence, but purposes and plans it. It is not blind but sagacious, not an accident but an aim. The loving father abroad meditates and means the good of his children ; the loving mother at home ruminates and resolves to provide for her little ones. She foresees their wants and forecasts their welfare. The stronger the love of the father or mother, the more comprehensive and far-reaching

is the parental aim. There is no love like our heavenly Father's, and there is no benign aim like his. What does he mean to do for us? What does he mean to make of us? What is the golden thread of his loving purpose that runs through all his works and ways and through all the spaces and ages of his human family? The answer is at hand—that we should not perish but have everlasting life. Not perdition but redemption, not death but life, not temporary good but everlasting blessedness, is what God appoints for us. This is what his paternal wisdom distinguishes and what his paternal will designs; and in harmony with this benignity, all his plans and processes are fitted and framed, for “he is in one mind, and none can turn him.”

The more we discern the danger of sin or unbelief, the more also we discern the kindness that purposes and plans our rescue. Kindness may, in part, be measured by the danger it averts or intends to avert. It is kind to project the comfort of the mourner, the healing of the wounded, the help of the weak, the supply of the needy; but still kinder is the deliverance of life, the rescue of them that are ready to perish by raging flames or swelling floods. There is nothing the world knows or God himself has made so precious as life. It is his noblest production, the shadow of his glory, the very image and illustration of himself, for he is Life, the living One. Accordingly, there is no love so kind as the love that resolves on redeeming imperilled life, that is bent to rush into the battle, or stem the flood, or brave the flames, to save them that are ready to perish. This is indeed the loving kindness of God. He means to save us from perdition, he means that we shall live. And the life on which his thought and heart are bent is not earthly but heavenly, not time-lasting but everlasting. The magnitude of this life is, in part, the measure of divine

kindness. Yet who can comprehend it? Where shall we find an index or illustration of it? Shall we look around for it? All earthly life declines and disappears. Spring's living green soon withers; summer's fairest flower speedily fades; the fleetest, strongest, proudest of all that live around us, in air or land or sea, soon droops and dies. But the life that God designs for us is coeval with himself. He means that while he lives, we shall live also. He means that we should have life in his family, the life of his sons and daughters. And what nobler and better thing could even God design for us? The children, in every family, are next to the parents. A thousand friends may come under our roof, a thousand guests may sit down at our table, but not one of them can ever come between ourselves and our children. Our children are necessarily next us, and all other dear ones form but an outer circle. So it is in man's family and so it is in God's. When we receive the adoption of sons by believing in Christ, when we are begotten of God by the Spirit of his love, we become next to God. No creature in the universe can displace or surmount us. The original angelic sons of God and the adopted ones of earth are our brethren; and all the created universe beside is but the servant. Whatever is our Father's is ours; whatever is his family's is ours. For the sake of us all in this family is every circling planet, every shooting comet, every lustrous moon, every shining star, every burning sun. For us the depths of space are thronged and peopled; for us new worlds are formed and older ones replenished; for us life multiplies in endless diversity and beauty. All things are ours; whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world; or life or death; or things present or things to come; all are ours; and we are Christ's; and

Christ is God's. The many redeemed ones are coming as sons to glory. Though hidden now, they shall soon be revealed, and shine as the sun forever and ever. Herein, first of all, is love, that God intends for us the life "that knows neither measure nor end."

§ 3 *The love of God to Man is Exhaustive in its Means.*

"For God so loved the world that HE GAVE HIS ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."—John iii. 16.

The best test of love is the *practical*. Words are cheap, and even good intentions, among men, are easily formed; but kind deeds are neither cheap nor common. Show us love without works, and we will show you love by works. The friendship that works to befriend is genuine; the love that toils and suffers, that gets and gives, for the loved one's good, is real. So it is with both human and divine love. God's designs concerning us are the designs of infinite parental regard, and therefore designs that constantly point to our everlasting life; but the acts and operations, the gifts and influences, that accomplish these designs are the best expression and evidence, the great practical proof and demonstration, of God's goodwill. The acts and the gifts of God's love are the illustration and complement of his kind designs.

God so loved us that he gave his only-begotten Son for us. As the son of man is man, the Son of God is God. When God gave his only-begotten Son, he gave a DIVINE gift, and therefore a gift of infinite value. The Son of God is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his substance. Who can comprehend this gift? Who by searching can find out God? Who can measure the in-

finite or weigh the divine? And who can appreciate the Love that bestows on us his only Son? "It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." This is the love of the Divinity, that his gift is divine.

When God gave his Son for us, he gave HIMSELF for us. He could not give his Son without giving himself, because the Father and the Son are one. "I and my Father" says Jesus, "are one." "All that the Father hath is mine," and therefore the gift of me and all that is mine is the gift of all that is the Father's. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." "He that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also." There are real distinctions in the Godhead, indicated to us as Father and Son and Holy Spirit, but there is only one God; and accordingly the Father's gift of the Son is the gift of himself, the gift of the one only living and true God, for God is not given in part or by measure. Self-devotion, self-surrender, self-sacrifice, is the climax and consummation of all liberality and love. It may be much to give to others our time, our energy, our property; but to give ourselves is more, to give ourselves is all, to give ourselves is to leave no room for any other generosity. This is the love of God, that he confided the salvation of man to no created heart or hand, that he commissioned no angel of might to undertake our redemption, but undertook it himself. This is his love, that he gave himself for our deliverance, withholding nothing, sparing nothing, but consecrating to our cause his own infinite riches and resources, identifying in fact our case with himself, so that the certainty of his own existence and sufficiency and dominion should be the certainty and guarantee of our salvation. If

God cannot fail, the cause of man's salvation cannot fail, for God has unreservedly committed to it himself and all that is his. If infinitude is equal and adequate to any purpose or attempt, there can be no deficiency or default in the means of our recovery. Herein is love, that God himself has interposed for us, that God has given himself to us, that God has made himself inseparably one with the cause of our restoration and return. And therefore the fulness of the Godhead is in Christ. "The Word was God ;" "this is the true God ;" "I am in the Father and the Father in me ;" "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." The Son of God is the *pleroma* or fulness of the Godhead, and therefore the gift of Christ to us is the gift of the divine *pleroma* or fulness. Herein is love, that God in sending his Son to save us has come himself to save us, that God in giving his Son has given himself, has given to us men and for our redemption the *pleroma* of the Godhead. "Oh the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out !"

God's love to us appears, not only in the agency of salvation, but in the process ; not only in the gift of his Son, but in the manner or method of the Son's operation. To what, or to what manner of accomplishing our redemption, did God give his Son ? Did he give him to be manifested in the circle of the heavens, clad in material splendour, that every eye might see him, and be overawed with his majesty and might ? Or did he give him to the throne of the Cosmos, the throne of all earthly government, to gather around himself all princes and potentates, all wealth and splendour, all genius and wisdom, so as to dazzle and dismay

us with the pomp of his royalty, the thunder of his power, the glory of his temple-filling train? Nothing of the kind. Herein is love, that God gave a divine gift, that he gave himself, the very pleroma, in the gift of his Son, and that he gave his Son to *humiliation*. He gave him to the littleness and helplessness of human infancy; to the stable and the manger; to the family of a carpenter, nay, to be himself a carpenter, for "is not this the carpenter?"—to handle the axe, the chisel, the hammer and the saw, till he was thirty years old, earning his bread in subjection to Joseph and Mary, and probably, in the last stage of his thirty years, supporting his widowed mother by the sweat of his brow. He gave him to be without human education, for "hath this man letters, having never learned?" He gave him to poverty and obscurity: "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." He gave him to human contumely, scorn and hostility, "a root out of a dry ground," contemptuously styled "the Nazarene." He was loaded with reproach and identified with Gehenna. "This man doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils;" this man is the servant of Satan, the instrument and agent of hell itself. It was thus that men aspersed and traduced him, as though there was no beauty in him, that they should desire him, and as though he was the vilest and the worst the world had ever known. God gave his Son to all this because he loved us. He gave him to the shadows and sorrows of Gethsemane, to drink such a cup of deadly bitterness that his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. He gave him to the shame and pain of Calvary, to drink to the last drop the cup of expiatory agony, an agony so great that it wrung from him the cry,

never heard before and never to be heard again—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—an agony so great that it ruptured his heart, it rent the temple, it rocked the earth, it darkened heaven, it raised the dead. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

§ 4. *The love of God to man is Gratuitous in its Method.*

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM should not perish but have everlasting life."—John iii. 16.

The method of redemption includes the process of preparation and the process of achievement. The process of preparation we have seen in the humiliation and death of the Son of God. The process of achievement is the actual deliverance of the sinner. What is its nature? In what manner does God really bring the individual sinner to himself, and incorporate him with his own family? How does the sinner find salvation? By what method are we to be reinstated in the divine favour and likeness? Or, to state it somewhat differently, redemption is both by price and by power. In the death of Christ for us, we are all bought with a price; in the work of the Spirit, we are individually saved by the power of truth and love. The first sort of redemption is general, the second is particular or personal. What is the manner of the second? This question is best answered by contrasting God's manner of working with man's.

On one principle or according to one rule, the business

of the world is carried on—the principle or rule of equitable exchange. This, ostensibly at least, determines the transactions of the world, in the form of value for value, labour for money, or goods for money, or labour for goods, or one sort of money for another, or one sort of goods for another. The affairs of mankind are thus conducted in every age and place, from the highest position to the lowest, and in every department and walk of life. But on this principle, no one could be saved, because salvation is unpurchasable and we have nothing to pay. The mercy of God cannot be bought, forgiveness knows no price, and there can be no commutation between heaven and earth. Love is higher and nobler than the rigour of justice or the scales of equity; and though God is just as well as good, in saving sinners, it is not the sinner but the Saviour that maintains God's rights and demonstrates his justice. With God it is just as well as good to save; to man salvation is simply a gift and not a right, a divine gratuity and not a legal claim, an acceptance and not a purchase, a transaction in mercy and not in equity. Even if salvation were or could be purchasable, we have nothing to pay. We are utterly bankrupt in all moral excellence. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." We have nothing but what already and inalienably belongs to God. "The gold is mine," says God, "and the silver is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. The earth is mine and its fulness. All souls are mine." Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for

the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good."

The method of ~~salvation~~ salvation, on God's part, is the gift of his Son, to be our vicarious priest and our victorious prince; and the method of salvation, on man's part, is belief in the Son of God. Divine gratuity and human faith are the complement and correlate of each other. "It is of faith, that it might be by grace." "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish but have everlasting life." "Whosoever believeth"—not whosoever worketh or deserveth or is self-fitted. "A man is justified by faith without deeds of law." "By deeds of law shall no flesh be justified in his sight," that is, be justly exempted from legal penalty, "for by law is the knowledge" not of salvation but "of sin." "To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt. But to him that worketh not," to him that, in the sight of God or in relation to God, never did one good deed all his life, whatever he may have been to his fellows, "but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." God "justifies the ungodly," for otherwise none could be justified, as all are ungodly. God justifieth ungodly man "that worketh not," that does no good, that cannot do good till he is freely saved. God justifies the ungodly man that worketh not, by counting his faith for righteousness. The ungodly man cannot work righteousness or keep the law, but he can repent and believe at God's command and call, under the operation of the Spirit; and his faith is immediately reckoned for righteousness. Faith is reckoned for righteousness because it receives righteousness, the righteousness of sin-bearing. Faith is not counted for righteousness as if it were itself righteousness or could itself be a legal

equivalent for righteousness, but because it is the recognition and reception of a righteousness that is divine,—divinely provided, divinely offered, divinely bestowed. “Surely, shall one say, in the Lord [Jesus Christ] have I righteousness and strength,” the righteousness of justification and the strength of sanctification. “This is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness.” “He is made of God unto us righteousness.” All our sins are answered or atoned for by the substitutionary suffering of the Son of God, for “of him it was exacted, and he was made answerable;” and when, by believing, we accept or personally appropriate this divine righteousness, offered unto all and bestowed on all that believe, our faith is reckoned for righteousness, because, in the economy of grace, it is the means and method of our complete justification before God, it serves as truly and effectually to the sinner for righteousness as perfect obedience serves to the unfallen. Not by doing but believing, not by deserving but receiving, not by earning but accepting, not by self-preparing but by simply coming, are we accepted and saved.

“WHOSOEVER” believeth shall not perish but have everlasting life. There is no exception or restriction. Not the Jew only or pre-eminently, not the Gentile only or pre-eminently, but whosoever believes is saved. The terms and method of the gospel know no distinction or peculiarity of race, colour, rank or condition. Any one of any time or place, that believes, is saved. Young or old, rich or poor, prince or peasant, learned or unlearned, male or female, bond or free, black or white, or red or brown, may believe and be saved.

The message is simply to man, the sinner, in this world; the method is simply believing in the Son of God; the time is now. Come then to the mercy-seat in the name of

Jesus; come as you are; and come at once; and though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Let us not vainly attempt either to save ourselves or prepare ourselves. "All the fitness he requireth is to know your need of him;" and this fitness "he himself gives you, 'tis his Spirit's glimmering beam," for it is the office and work of the Spirit to convince the world of sin, or to give to the world the knowledge of sin as well as of righteousness and judgment. Every attempt to heal or help ourselves only makes our case worse and aggravates our guilt, because it is attempting to do what Christ alone can do and what God has forbidden us to attempt. The more we try to fit ourselves for Christ the more we keep away from him and the worse we make ourselves. How can the guilty fit himself for mercy? His guilt is his fitness, and nothing is required of him but acceptance. How can the diseased fit himself for the physician? His disease is his fitness, and nothing can be his but submission to benevolent skill. God himself provides salvation by giving his Son to the sufferings of priesthood and the succourings of princedom; God himself prepares us for salvation by giving us the knowledge of our sins and our Saviour; God himself draws but not drives us to himself by his Spirit of truth and love; God himself bestows salvation on believing; and God himself appoints the time. "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" "What could your Redeemer do more than he has done for you?" "This is the time; no more delay; this is the acceptable day." God gives us no command or invitation to come to-morrow; he gives us no promise for to-morrow; he holds out no hope of salvation on the morrow. On the contrary, he has made human life the most fearfully precarious of all things, that

we may not presume by delaying, that we may not risk everything by postponement, but that at once we may turn to our Saviour from every sin, and live.

§ 5. *The love of God to man is Universal in its Scope.*

"For God so loved THE WORLD that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. FOR GOD SENT NOT HIS SON INTO THE WORLD TO CONDEMN THE WORLD, BUT THAT THE WORLD THROUGH HIM MIGHT BE SAVED.—John iii. 16, 17.

Whom or how many does God love? What is the scope or extent of his regard to sinners of mankind? The answer is "the world," for the Scripture of truth knows no other answer. There are many passages that denote the universality of God's love, but there is not one that asserts its limitation. There are passages that men have construed or rather misconstrued into the support of limiting theories and for the sanction of their own "little systems," but no direct and express limitation of the divine benevolence can be found in all the Bible. When Christ says "the world," he means the world; and we have no right to fritter away his meaning. God speaks to us in the Bible in our own language and manner, for otherwise he would speak in riddles; and when he says he loves the world, we should not dare to deny or doubt it. The word that Christ uses is not *αἰών*, age or world; or *γῆ*, land or earth; or *οἰκουμένη*, empire or world; but *κόσμος* (*cosmos*), which is the proper Greek word for world. It is either the merest trifling or the veriest cavilling to object to the proper general sense of this word by quoting the exceptional or tropical use of it, as when Peter employs it for the order or adorning of female attire, or James for the iniquity of the human tongue, or as when

the Pharisees say with customary exaggeration—"Behold, the world is gone after him."* What has such a use of the word by such men as the Pharisees to do with the most solemn and important use of it by the Master of words, in conversing with Nicodemus about the purpose and love of God? The word occurs one hundred and eighty-seven times in the New Testament, and so seldom in a tropical or limited sense (which is founded on the general sense) that the very exception proves the rule, and shuts us up to the general sense, which is the primary, proper and customary sense, that is not to be questioned or departed from (especially when the word is used by Christ or his inspired servant), without the gravest and best-weighed reasons. In the present instance, there is not a shadow of reason for any secondary sense. The meaning of the word in the sixteenth verse is determined by its use in the seventeenth: "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." With this the Bible throughout agrees. "The Lord is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works." "God is love." "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you," that is, love all, do good to all, pray for all, not excepting the worst and most hostile, "that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven," the imitators, partakers of the nature of your heavenly Father; "for he," in his universal love, "maketh the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust," that is on all. "Be ye therefore perfect," by all-embracing love, "even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" or all-embracing.

* 1 Peter iii. 3; James iii. 6; John xii. 19.

in his love. "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Because God loves all men, he is "not willing that any should perish but that all should be saved, and," as the means of salvation, "come to the knowledge of the truth." "He is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe." "I came," says Jesus, "that I might save the world."

Universal love is not actual universal salvation, since many will not yield to this love to be saved. A universal Saviour is not actual universal salvation, for the salvation of godlike man is not by divine compulsion but by divine light and love and by man's free acceptance; and many will not come to the Saviour to have life. A universal atonement is not universal salvation, but the foundation or preparation that makes the salvation of every man legal and practicable. But universal love, and a universal Saviour, and a universal Spirit (convincing "the world") and a universal overture are the ample and unquestionable warrant for the coming of any and every sinner to the Son of God for life. Nothing can warrant any one's approach to God but the certain terms and tenor of the divine communications. If there is any exception, how can I know that I am not that exception? If the love is less than general, how can I be assured that it extends to me? How? By the convictions or feelings that are supposed to be wrought in my heart for salvation by the Spirit of God and that imply God's regard for me? Is it then something in myself that I am to depend on as the warrant of faith? If so, my faith is inferential, my dependence is immediately on myself and not on the divine testimony, and my belief for salvation is a sort of refined phariseism, a sort of subtle self-righteousness. No! the warrant of faith is not in me but in the express word of God; the evidence of God's love to me is no opera-

tion or condition of my own deceitful heart, no logical construction of my own imaginings or feelings, but the written and explicit assurance of God, my Maker. I want nothing in myself to warrant me in coming to God for salvation. It is not my depth of conviction, my agony of remorse, my flood of sorrow, my penitential sighs and tears, that entitle or encourage me to approach the mercy-seat ; and it is not the want of these that can disentitle or disqualify me to sue for salvation. I want nothing whatever within, nothing whatever in myself, to authorize my prayer. In me is a heart of stone, which the Saviour has promised to turn into a heart of flesh ; in me is the leprosy which the good Physician has promised to cure ; in me is death which the "Quickening Spirit" promises to transmute into life. What more can I expect or require as the ground of faith and prayer ? God loves me, because he tells me that he loves the world ; "Christ loved me and gave himself for me," because he tells me that he gave himself a ransom for all. The messenger of mercy is to go into all the world, for "the field is the world," and "to every creature" in that field, and therefore to me.

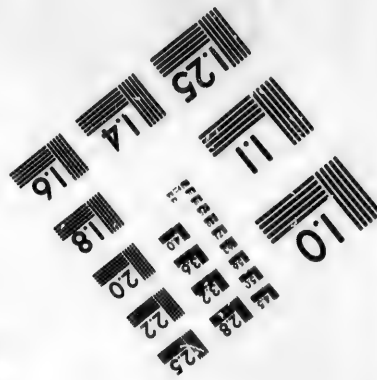
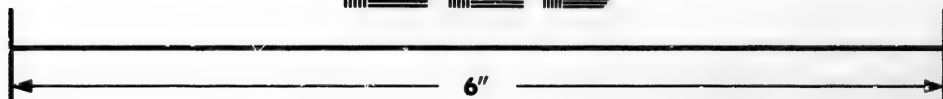
Respecting the extent of the atonement, it is often said that the real question to be settled is THE DESIGN OF GOD ; and so it is, for of the sufficiency of the atonement itself for all there can be no question. The atonement is for all, if God intended it to be for all. The scope of God's love and of his Son's mission to the world, doubtless coincides with the scope of his design respecting the salvation of the world. What is that design ? Christ himself tells us in the most explicit and decisive terms : "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world," with the design or intention of judging or condemning the world,

"but" with this most benignant, magnificent and impartial paternal design, "that the world through him might be saved." The same design is elsewhere declared or denoted. "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son," with this purpose, or for this end, "to be the Saviour of the world." "I came," with this design or purpose, or for this end, "that I might save the world." "That the world may believe that thou didst send me:" "That the world may know that thou didst send me." "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." The extent of his reconciling work is the best evidence of the extent of his reconciling design, just as the scope of Christ's intercession denotes the scope of his own and his Father's design.

Inspiration tells us that "there is no difference" among men, "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Since there is no difference among men, there is no ground or reason why God should make a difference in his propitious love to men or in the design of the mission of his Son to men. God loves all his children beforehand, without a difference, because he sees in them no difference. In the wisdom of his love he governs his children with administrative difference, through time and space, and will probably disclose hereafter the grounds and reasons of this counsel of his will; but in the reality, the impartiality and amplitude of his paternal love, he governs all his children kindly and fairly. It is Heavenly Love that rules the world, in the Patriarchal, Mosaic and Christian economies; and accordingly, "in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him."

The nature as well as the scope of Christ's mission appears clearly in this conversation. The verb *κρίνω* (*krino*), rendered "condemn," in John iii. 17, occurs one hundred and fourteen times in the New Testament. Our translators





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have rendered it "judge" in eighty-eight instances, "determine" in seven, "condemn" in five, "sue at the law" or "go to law" in three, and in the other eleven instances by "esteem," "call in question," "sentence," "ordain," "conclude," "think," "decree," "damn," "avenge." The meaning of words is not to be determined by counting, but it is evident that our learned translators regarded the word as primarily and properly signifying to judge; so Dean Alford renders it in John iii. 17, 18, and so it ought to be rendered everywhere, for it has no other meaning. It is used to denote one or other of two kinds of judgment, the judgment of *persons* and the judgment of *things*. The judgment of persons is a governmental or rectoral process, the process of a ruler of persons; the judgment of things is an intellectual or critical process, the process of an inquirer or hunter of truth, the process of any person in discriminating the truth or excellence of things from their falsity or evil. The judgment of persons belongs to the administration of law to persons; the judgment of things (personal or impersonal) is the intellectual or critical or educational discrimination of the quality of things. The judgment of persons is a curatorial or governmental process, consisting in the award of legal penalty to the guilty or of legal premium to the righteous; the judgment of things is the intellectual, critical or logical distinction between the truth or error, the good or evil of things, without forensic purpose or retributive design. In relation to persons, that is, in the forensic or juridical use of the word *κρίνω*, Christ says—"God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through him might be saved;" and in relation to things, that is, in the intellectual or critical or educational use of the word, he says

—"As I hear I judge," as I hear things, I discriminate them,
—"I have many *things* to say and to judge of you," many things belonging to you, to discriminate and declare. The declaration of Christ that his mission and function, his office and work, were not to judge but to save, involves one of the loftiest and largest distinctions in the divine government; and without pausing to appreciate it, we cannot understand the full import of our Lord's words. We know only two kinds of divine government, the CONSERVATIVE and the CURATIVE, or the REDEMTIVE and the RETRIBUTIVE. God governed upright angels and upright man conservatively, that is, to maintain them in the excellence and dignity in which he created them; but fallen men he governs restoratively or redemptively, that is, to reinstate them in their pristine dignity and excellence. When the restorative government of the world is consummated by the resurrection of the dead or "the redemption of our bodies," Christ will deliver up his mediatorial kingdom to God the Father; and God, resuming universally and forever his conservative and retributive government, will judge both angels and men by his Son, whom he hath appointed "Heir of all things." "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." God's government of the world now, from the offence in Eden to the destruction of death in the last day, is the mediation of Salvation; his government, in the end of the world and onward forever, will be the judgment of Retribution. Now both to Nicodemus and to others, our Lord distinguishes the salvation of the curative or restorative government, for which he is come, from the judgment of the conservative and retributive government, for which, at

the end of the world, he will come. He is not now our Judge, but he is fore-appointed and "will come to be our Judge." His only purpose and work now is to seek and to save that which was lost; and so it will be to the end of the world. "After death," (after the course or the reign or the last instance of physical death, and after the reversal of death by the resurrection), "the judgment;" and then He who had been the mediatorial or restorative ruler of the world, from the Fall to the Finality, will become the retributive ruler of the universe, to make judicial award to angels and men, according to their works. And so he says—"God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through him might be saved:" "I judge no man," that is, I now judge no man; "if any man hear my sayings and keep them not, I judge him not," I judge him not now; "for I came not that I might judge the world but that I might save the world." Christ does not now juridically judge "the world" or "man," but he intellectually or discriminatingly and didactically judges "all things."

The saving government of Christ extends over all the space of the human world, and through all its time, but with wise diversity. Throughout the ages, from Adam to his ultimate son, how greatly varied, how successively developed, is God's restorative government of mankind! And how diversely developed it is still throughout the world-wide field! In all this world of ours, there is neither spot nor moment, neither a man nor a fragment of his earthly life, beyond the scope of redeeming grace. In this world, no man is, or was or ever will be, outside the range of restorative rule. Every man comes into the world, wherever he comes and whenever he comes, and every man stays in this world, as

long as he stays in it, under the scope of the Father's redemptive love and the Son's redemptive mission. God's restorative mercy is as wide as the world and as long as its life. Every man enters the world and stays in it under mediatorial mercy and on trial ; and quits it at last for final judgment.

Probably the best preparation for studying the diversities of divine administration, over the regions of the world, is to study such diversities through the ages of the world, where revelation sheds its light ; for its principles in space and time are one. The religion of men, "from Adam to Moses," was the universal religion of CONSCIENCE ; from Moses to John (the apostle) it was the Gentile religion of conscience and the Jewish religion of LAW ; from John to the Judge, there are the religion of conscience among the Heathen, the religion of law among the Jews, and among the Christians the religion of LOVE, which is to become universal and final. In the book of Genesis, we have the biblical history of the religion of conscience, and in the book of Job its theology, but in the Old Testament, for the most part, we have the Scriptures of the religion of law ; and in the New Testament, we have the Scriptures of the religion of love. Although the great lines of conscience, law and love, are clearly drawn and easily discriminated, the three sorts of religion are somewhat intermingled. When Paul, in the beginning of his epistle to the Romans, denotes the religion of conscience, the law written on the heart, he does not mean to say that there was no unwritten revelation from Adam to Moses, or that there are no vestiges of such revelation still among the heathen ; and when he habitually calls Judaism the law, he does not mean that there was no divine law before Moses or that there is no divine law in the gospel. And

when John, the last of the apostles, and perhaps the only apostolic survivor of the abolition of Judaism, inculcates the religion of love, he does not mean to denote that there had been no love in the world before. The religion of conscience is not without law and love ; the religion of law is not without conscience and love ; and the religion of love is not without conscience and law ; but still those three great successive and now cœval administrations are easily distinguished by the student of revelation and observer of mankind.

The great point is to know that the whole world belongs to Christ, and not to suppose that his gracious reign is limited to such little tracts as Palestine before his advent or to Christendom since. "He everywhere hath sway, and all things serve his might." From Adam to his last-born son, "the field is the world." Christ reigns where his name is not heard or his word known. He reigns in the starlight of the religion of conscience, in the moonlight of law, and in the sunlight of love. The fruits of his passion are not confined to the limits of his organizations and instrumentalities ; for "in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him," and "they shall come from the east and the west, and from the north and the south [that is, from all the world], and shall sit down in the kingdom of God."

CHAPTER IV.

THE GIFT OF LOVE IS THE CHOICE OF FAITH.

§ 1 *Religion is Personal.*

"He that believeth on him . . . he that believeth not . . . in the name of the only-begotten Son of God."—John iii. 18.

THE purport of these words, taken in their connection, is the personality of religion ; and the wisdom and courage of the great Teacher appear in inculcating it. The Jews confided in their descent from Abraham, in their national inheritance, in their severance from the heathen : "We have Abraham to our father—the temple of the Lord are we—all else are dogs." In opposition to all such vain confidence and boasting, the Master says—"He that believeth in the Son of God is uncondemned," not the world at large or in particular the son of Abraham ; "but he that believeth not," whether Jew or Gentile, "is condemned." The faith that saves is not ancestral or gregarious, but personal ; the unbelief that destroys is our own individual unbelief, not the unbelief of our parents, kindred, country or neighbours.

This teaching is no less necessary now than formerly. As social beings, we are always in danger of making the virtues of others our refuge, or making their faults our excuse. Adam blamed his wife, and Eve blamed the serpent. The Hebrew gloried in the name of Abraham and the grandeur of his favoured nation. And so we think our-

selves safe or superior because we belong to a Christian nation or a Christian church, because we belong to a godly lineage or family, or to a religious age and place; and if this does not quite secure us, we cast whatever blame remains on our erring predecessors, especially Adam, on our ungenial circumstances or the old man within. To suppose ourselves successors of the apostles hides a multitude of sins and creates a plenitude of power. The sceptered episcopate or the compact presbytery or the mere democracy or the venerated founder may be the idol of our boast. Not Christianity but churchianity may be our confidence and watch-word. We may take the culture of our fellowship for conversion; and, unlike our Master, scorn all others as Philistines. The remedy for all such folly is the personality as well as vitality of true religion. A person is a being that, like man, is capable of conscious choice; it is only personally we are either wrong or right with God; society means our relationship to each other, not our relationship to God, but may serve as a sphere or means for the development of that highest relationship. Knowing fully the tendency of men to shelter or excuse themselves behind society, our Lord passes at once from the universal scope of the Father's love and the Son's mission to the personality or particularity of religion. God loved the world and sent his Son to save it, but this secures no man's salvation, for it is "he that believeth" that is justified, and "he that believeth not" that is condemned. As it was not Abraham that made a Hebrew right with God, or Ishmael that made an Arab wrong, or Esau that made an Edomite evil, so it is not Adam that makes any man guilty or the Father's mere gift of his Son that makes any man really safe and right. What we are to Christ personally, by personal faith or unbelief, that is what we really are to God.

The gospel specifies faith as the one thing needful for acceptance with God, a faith that has repentance for its antecedent, Christ for its object, and love for its consequent. There may be many things in the Bible that we have not had time to learn, or that are hard to be understood, or that are not yet truly interpreted and therefore not really believed; but the one thing necessary to be believed for salvation is "the name of the only-begotten Son of God." The name of any one is what is truly or competently said of him; and so the name of the Son of God is what is divinely said of him, what the Father testifies of him, what the Spirit witnesses concerning him; and all this is to be found in the pages of inspiration. We need not wait to be saved till we have studied the Patriarchs, appreciated Moses, apprehended the Prophets, and estimated the Harbinger and all the Evangelists and Apostles. What we are to believe for salvation is the testimony that God has given concerning his Son.

What is this testimony? It is, first of all, that THE FATHER HIMSELF LOVES US, for his Son is the gift of his love to us. God loved us from the beginning, loved us of his own accord, loves us now. Men generally do not believe this. They believe that God relaxes his severity or somewhat relents in his wrath, and that he may become loving; but they do not believe that to themselves God is really and already love, that he is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their trespasses. They think of him as a stern sovereign, rather than as a loving father; they think of his power and his glittering sword and his scales, rather than of his loving heart, his inviting voice and his open arms. Conscious of guilt, they shrink from him with terror, and tremble at every whisper

of his power. Even when resolved like the prodigal to return, it is rather to a ruler that is to be petitioned and conciliated they think of returning than to a father that is already on his way to them, and will wait for no words or forms to caress and bless them. Conscious guilt can scarcely believe in such love, but hopes to become a "hired servant ;" and accordingly it is the more necessary to hold up this spontaneous boundless love of the Father, in the gift of his Son, as the object of every repenting sinner's belief. What like this love can attract and encourage such a sinner ? What refuge is like this for the anxious sinner to repair to ? There is no other refuge, and there needs no other. Here is personal love for the personal prodigal, which he is to believe for himself and not for another. This, first of all, should every Christian teacher and preacher hold forth to the mourner in Zion ; and urge it with amplitude of Scripture argument and wealth of aptest illustration.

It may be said in objection to such teaching as this that the Bible ascribes anger and wrath to God as well as love. So it does, but in what sense ? God is not angry with men for what they cannot help or avoid, but solely for their wilful persistence in evil ; he is angry with them because they will not submit to his authoritative goodness, will not hear his paternal call and command, will not accept his great salvation, will not walk in the light of his love ; and his anger with them for sin is the anger of holy love. He is angry with the wicked every day for persisting in wickedness ; he is angry as a loving father, who would save and bless them, but they will not be saved and blest, and as a holy father who can look upon the wilful persistent wickedness of his foolish sons with nothing but the grief of love and the aversion of purity. His anger is not judicial, for it is "after death

the judgment," and "the Father judgeth no man." His anger is not retributive, for retribution is the award and issue of judgment. His anger with men in this world, in the probation of this life, is the anger of redemptive love. His wrath is either another name for such anger or else it is the indication of such anger in its outgoing or operation, in its practical manifestation, in its chastisement and discipline of the disobedient, or in its manner of removing the incorrigible from the sphere of help and hope. Because the Father looks with the grief of holy love on the unfaithful, and with the aversion of holy love on the unyielding, he is said to be "grieved" or "vexed;" as Jesus, in the days of his flesh, looked round about on the refractory Jews "with anger, being grieved," lovingly grieved and pained, "for the hardness of their hearts." There is no judicial wrath in God now against any living sinner, for he has sent his Son to save the world and not to judge the world; there is no destructive anger in God's heart now against any in the flesh. "Fury is not in me. Who would set the briers and thorns [of impotent humanity] against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me." * As soon as the sinner repents, the divine anger is turned away; and as soon as he believes, he becomes a child of God.

The redemptive wrath of God, or the practical expression of his redemptive anger, consists in the infliction of physical evil. "Is there [physical] evil in a city, and Jehovah ha h not done it?" This evil serves two great purposes—to discipline the sinner and to limit his probation. As the limitation or termination of probation, we call it

* Isaiah xxvii. 4, 5.

death, which is the strongest and most appalling form of physical evil ; as discipline or chastisement, it is the shadow of death, comprizing corporeal pain and sickness, hunger and thirst, weakness and weariness, noxious vegetation, and in fact all the physical ills that are incident to humanity in this life. God is said to be angry with men, or to send forth his wrath against them, when he so signally and impressively closes their probation as to admonish the survivors and dissuade them from evil ; or when he inflicts physical evil on the living, as a means of reclaiming or improving them. In other words, he may make the dismissal of the incorrigible from the probation of life so sudden or so severe, like the drowning of the antediluvians and the destruction of Sodom, as to benefit the surviving ; and he may lay on the rod of his anger for their reformation, or the rod of his fatherly care for their improvement. In either case, in either form, his anger to the living is the anger of holy love, his wrath to probationers is paternal chastisement ; and even his method of removing the wicked (for removed every man must be) is made the means of moral impression to those that survive. God's government of this whole world and of every man in it, from the Fall to the Judgment, is simply and solely the government of redeeming love, wise and holy love, a love that is parental in its nature, benignant in its ends, exhaustive in its means, gratuitous in its method, and universal in its scope. It is a love so holy as to be angry with persistent sin, and to transfer the incorrigible from the sphere of his evil influence to the imprisonment of Hades ; and so strong as to chastise the corrigible "for a moment" only, and to "delight in mercy" that "endures forever." To every living sinner God is love, to all the world he is love ; and to every repentant or

returning sinner he is reconciling and forthgoing love, that, like the prodigal's father, will give, in the moment of believing, the embrace and the kiss, the ring-pledge and the raiment, the call for joy and the signal for festivity.

The testimony of God to us, that we may believe it and be saved, is, in the second place, **THE SIN-BEARING OF HIS SON.** Christ was lifted up on the cross, to pour out his soul to death for sinners. He not only died for us but he died for our sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but for the sins of the whole world. The sinner, convinced "of sin, of righteousness and of judgment," wants more than an assurance of God's world-wide benignity. With an awakened conscience, he wants to know how he can be saved from sin without any connivance at sin, without interference with God's rights, without dishonour to God's Law; and what he wants he finds in the sin-bearing of the Son of God. "Now, without law, God's righteousness has been manifested, being attested by the law and the prophets, even God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all the believing; for there is no difference: for all sinned and are fallen short of the glory of God, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God set (publicly) forth (as) propitiatory,—(available) through faith in his blood,—for demonstration of his righteousness, because of the pretermission of the sins of former times in the forbearance of God,—in order to the demonstration of his righteousness in the present time, that he may be righteous even in justifying him who is of faith in Jesus."*

* Romans iii. 21-26 :—Revised version by Rev. Dr. J. Morison, London, 1866.

These two things, mainly, constitute "the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son," namely, that the Son is the love-gift of God and the sin-bearer of man. As the divine gift of the Father, he represents and embodies God's love to the world ; as the divinely-given Priest of mankind, he atones for the sins of the world. In his person, he combines the nature of the Father and his offending human children, for he is both the Son of God and the Son of man, "a child born, a son given ;" in his office and work, he is the very fulness of the love that gave him, and the very fountain of life to the sinner that receives him. These two things, truly taken, that God loves us and that Christ died for us, constitute the gospel of God concerning his Son, the gospel of the grace of God, glad tidings of great joy to all people. The sinner wants to be reconciled to God, and this gospel tells him that God loves him ; he wants to be saved from his sins, and this gospel tells him that Christ bore his sins in his own body on the tree. What more need he believe or know to have peace with God, to be consciously reconciled, to be freely and fully justified ? This is what the awakened trembling sinner is called to believe for admission into the family of faith. What can be simpler than this gospel, what can be more suitable ? A child can apprehend and believe it, and to "babes" is it really revealed. Doubtless it involves and implies much, as the new-born soul, in the process of his growth and education, will find out ; but no analysis of it is necessary for laying hold of salvation. Man enters the kingdom of grace as a little child, taking God at his word, and believing without doubt that the Father is love and the Son life ; and the faith that thus begins should thereafter grow exceedingly.

This faith or the want of it is purely personal. It can-

not exist by society or proxy. Christ commissions his servants to preach the gospel to every creature or to each creature in all the world ; and in the Acts of the Apostles, we see their obedience, in the tenor of their public utterances and in their personal communications. On the day of Pentecost, it is " whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. . . Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins."* Peter in the temple says—" Every soul that will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people," and " God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."† The truth was communicated personally to Simon, the Eunuch, Saul, Cornelius, Sergius Paulus, the Philippian jailor and many others.

The personality of religion is most emphatically recognized in the epistles. " Be of the same mind, one toward another." ‡ " Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. . . Every one of us shall give account of himself to God. . . The faith which thou hast, have it to thyself before God."§ " Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon . . . If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss ; but he himself shall be saved."|| " Let a man examine himself."¶ " All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."** The love of 1 Cor. xiii., is described as a personal excellence : " I am nothing . . . It profiteth me nothing . . . I put away childish

* Acts ii. 21, 38. † Acts iii. 23, 2 ‡ Romans xii. 16.

§ Romans xiv. 5, 12, 22. || 1 Cor. iii. 10, 14, 15.

¶ 1 Cor. xi. 28. ** 1 Cor. xii. 11.

things." "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad . . . If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." * "Let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own load. Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived ; God is not mocked ; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." †

The same doctrine of human personality, or of personal religion, belongs to both Testaments. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son : the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him . . . when a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them, for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die." Again, "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive . . . I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God." ‡ Men are not swept up to heaven or down to hell in crowds. To each sort of ground in the parable of the sower, is given a personal explanation. Every man's mind is his kingdom. "Every heart knoweth his own bitterness,

* 2 Cor. v. 10, 17. † Gal. vi. 4-8 ; partly revised by Bishop Ellicott. ‡ Ezekiel xviii. 20, 26, 27, 30.

and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy." Sin is personal transgression ; salvation is personal deliverance ; and life and death are personal realities.

§ 2. *Religion is Determinate.*

"He that believeth on him is NOT CONDEMNED, but he that believeth not IS CONDEMNED ALREADY, because he hath not believed in the name of THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD."—John iii. 18.

Religion is determinate, not vague or doubtful, because it primarily means faith in the Son of God. The Son of God is God, as the son of man is man ; and the term "only-begotten" strengthens the indication of divinity. Believers in Christ are begotten of God, in the sense of being divinely made like God or partakers of his moral nature, but the Christ is the only-begotten Son of God, in the sense of being really God or of possessing God's essential nature. In the first sense, God has many sons ; in the second sense, he has only one Son, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Not to believe in him, therefore, is not to believe in the only living and true God, as he is revealed in his own word. To reject Christ, as he is proclaimed in the gospel, is to reject God, for the Father and the Son are one. This is the unbelief that is justly condemned. With such unbelief no pure theism can coexist. No man can be a believer in the one only God who rejects him as he reveals himself. He may be a believer in some god of his own conception or of some other man's conception ; but the deific creation of human conception or imagination is not the Godhead that creates and rules the universe, since he can be known by us only as the God that gave his only-begotten Son for the world's salvation.

How great is our guilt, then, when we turn away from Christ, when we will not have him to reign over us, when in the pride of our unbelief or the worldliness of our pursuits, we virtually say—"Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" He who made "purification of sin" at the end of the Jewish days, he who "made the ages," he who is "appointed heir of all things," he who "sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high," he who "upholds the universe by the word of his power," is "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his substance."* He and the Father are one, and therefore to disbelieve him is to be condemned for making God a liar. From this condemnation there is no appeal, because it is the condemnation of God; and there can be no escape but by the submission in this life of repentant faith.

Religion is determinate, not vague or doubtful, because the truly religious man *consciously* believes. It is a great mistake to suppose that our condition before God can not be known till the day of judgment. On the contrary, he that believeth is not condemned, is not now condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already. Every man's state is real and definite, according to his own unbelief or faith. We need no messenger from the skies to tell us

* Hebrews ii, 2-4 and i, 1-3.

what we are and whither we are going. God's word and our own conscience are sufficient. We know whether we have turned to God by repentant faith or not. It is nowhere written or implied in Scripture that either faith or unbelief is immutable, for the believer was once an unbeliever and may become an unbeliever again, may so draw back from faith that there shall be no pleasure in him ; but it is taught that faith immediately and really saves from "sins that are past," and that unbelief already condemns us and will condemn, as long as it lasts. "He that believeth is not condemned," meaning not condemned as soon as he believes, and not condemned as long as he believes. "He that believeth not is condemned already," meaning condemned without delay, because of unbelief and during unbelief. We need not then be ignorant of our relationship to God. Faith and unbelief are not mystical and unintelligible. To believe in the name of the only-begotten Son of God is intelligently and really to receive the divine communications concerning Christ. A man cannot believe God without knowing it, just as he cannot learn or communicate anything among men without knowing it. "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even to you that believe on the name of the Son of God : " "we know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding, that we may know the true One, and we are in the true One, in his Son Jesus Christ."* "The wind blows where it will, and thou hearest the sound thereof."

On the other hand, not to know ourselves believing is to be unbelievers. We cannot believe unconsciously or come to Christ by faith without knowing it ; and therefore not to

* 1 John v. 13, 20. Alford's Revision.

know that we have believed is to be unbelieving, not to be conscious of faith is to be without faith. We need no witness from the distance, from the depths or from the heavens, to tell us that we have or have not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. The word of faith is nigh us, in our mouth and in our heart; it is the testimony of God concerning his Son; and to receive it without knowing is a contradiction in terms. We may be in doubt about the results of faith, but how can a man be in doubt about the reception of a communication that he receives? Nothing can be more determinate than the religion of believing.

§ 3 *Religion is Voluntary.*

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men LOVED darkness rather than light, because their DEEDS were evil.”—John iii. 19.

Some relationships to God are involuntary. We are his creatures without our choice, for “it is he that hath made us and not we ourselves.” We are subjects of his sovereign sway without our choice, for he is “the king of all the earth.” He gives us life, and maintains his right to us, and will bring us into judgment. In all this we have no option, but it is not this that determines our present character and ultimate condition. Our everlasting state is not what we drift to but what we drive to. The retributions of God are not arbitrary and unconditional appointments, but judicial allotments, according to our persistent choice before him, and according to his own forewarnings. “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but

he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." "God will render to every man according to his works," that is, according to his choice, for working is choosing both in purpose and practice.

So our Lord teaches in his conversation with Nicodemus. Religion is personal, personal faith or unbelief. Personal religion is determinate, because faith instantly determines our relationship to God as justified, and unbelief instantly determines our relationship to him as condemned. But what of the faith or unbelief itself? Is this voluntary or involuntary? If absolutely involuntary, the issue is somehow determined for us by another, and we are finally disposed of as physical existences and not as moral beings. If in some proper sense voluntary, then we choose our relationship to God, we choose our character before him, and, under his forewarnings, we choose the judicial award. Very important therefore is the Master's teaching on this point. Do his lips give any certain sound in this conversation, on so weighty and momentous a question? Let us see.

"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The first thing that strikes us in the study of these words is that we are not helplessly and hopelessly benighted, that our sins cannot be excused or extenuated on the ground of ignorance, but that when we sin, we sin IN THE LIGHT. "Light is come into the world," for Christ is come into the world, and he is the light of the world, the Sun of righteousness, whose wings bring healing. He shines directly wherever his word comes to men; and everywhere else he shines by reflection, as the light of the sun is reflected by moons and planets, in zodiacal light and aurora borealis. The Light of the world shines down

through the ages and over the nations. He shines in the religion of conscience, the religion of law, and the religion of love. He is the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world ; or, " the true Light, which lighteth every man, came into the world." Every one in the world will be judged according to his light, according to his opportunities and abilities. " If ye were blind, ye would not have sin." " If I had not come and spoken unto them, they would not have sin."* " It is required of a man according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not." " What things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law." What things soever the gospel says, it says to them that are under the gospel. What the Bible says, it says to those that have it. What the law or the gospel or the Bible always says *to* men must not be confounded with what it sometimes says *of* men ; and especially what it says to those to whom it comes must not be confounded with what it says of those to whom it does not come. The Gentile world of old, without Jewish law, was not judged by Jewish law but by the light of conscience ; and the Gentile world now, without Jewish law or Christian gospel, (by no choice of its own), is not judged by such law or gospel but by its own light of conscience. " For when Gentles, which have not the [Mosaic] law, do by nature the things of the law, these, though they have not the law, are the law unto themselves, inasmuch as they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness thereto, and their thoughts among one another accusing or else excusing."† " The times of this [Gentile] ignorance God overlooked ; but now [as far as his word comes] com-

* John ix. 41 ; xv. 22,—Alford's Revision.

† Romans ii. 14, 15. Alford's Revision.

mandeth all men everywhere to repent."* And the times of ignorance he still overlooks, throughout the world, suffering all the heathen nations "to walk in their own ways," till his word comes to them.

The second thing that strikes us in the study of the nineteenth verse is that what God condemns men for is not only something in the light but something FROM THE HEART. "Men *loved* darkness rather than light." What God condemns men for is not irremediable darkness, absolute ignorance, or satisfaction with hopeless, helpless night, but for loving darkness rather than light; or, in other words, for the heart-choice of darkness. He does not condemn us for guilty predecessors, for evil surroundings, for unfavorable circumstances, for infelicitous relationships that we have not chosen and cannot control; but he condemns us for what is within us, for the working and state of our own souls. He condemns us for evil love, and bids us look within for the cause and the root of our danger and dread. It is no ancestral deed that ruins us, it is no mere inheritance that curses us, it is nothing external that determines us. Circumstances may mould us but they neither make nor mar us. "The things which come out of the man, those are they that defile the man. For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these things come from within, and defile the man."†

The third thing that strikes us, in the study of the nineteenth verse, is that the evil love for which God condemns us SPRINGS FROM OUR OWN CHOICE or is the fruit of our own

* Acts xvii. 30. Alford, except within the brackets.

† Mark vii. 15, 20, 21, 22, 23; Alford.

doings. Feelings are not volitions, but they may spring from volitions. Love and hatred are not themselves electivity or choice, but they may be the fruit of it. And so in this very case they are. "Men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." We love evil because we do evil. Why do we prefer darkness to light? Because we voluntarily practise the works of darkness, choose dark and devious deeds, pursue dark and evil ways, turn from the light and plunge into the night. The love of darkness rather than light, then, is not hereditary or native, not an infliction or fatality, not an involuntary state or condition, but the natural result of our own free deeds, our own wilful evil ways. We come into the world, it is true, without spiritual strength, without the indwelling of the Divine Spirit, and so grow up disjoined from God or totally ungodly; but we do not come into the world with the love of any specific evil. In fact, we do not come into the world with any feeling, with either love or hatred. We come into the world capable of loving and hating, capable of knowing and ignoring, capable of purposing and performing; but these operations and changes are not congenital conditions but the vital developments of free beings, and they will take place without God, if we do not give him our hearts, at his benign command and call. No man is born with the love of alcohol or gambling. Men love alcohol because they drink it; they love gambling because they practise it; they love dissipation of every sort because they addict themselves to it and refuse the highest good for which they were made. The hand and the foot, or the use we make of them, as well as the eye and the ear, affect the heart. If we walk with the wicked, we shall love them and be like them, but we were not so born.

The preferential love of darkness is self-originated ; and very easily, because the heart is vacant and ready for almost anything that chooses to enter. The intoxicant that at first disgusts us we make palatable and pleasant by persistent use, perhaps to please our companions, perhaps to become like others. The gaming-table that shocked us at the outset, by its madness and vice, fascinates us at last, after wilful addiction to it. We have only ourselves to blame, if we love darkness rather than light ; and we are justly condemned for giving ourselves, in spite of the light, to deeds and ways of evil, to haunts and habits of sin and shame. We are fallen but not forsaken ; we are degenerate but not deserted ; we are lapsed but not utterly lost. We, to whom the gospel comes, are not in the night but in the light of the Son of God. We are not the helpless victims of evil circumstances but foolish lovers of darkness. We are not lovers of darkness by natural or philosophical necessity but by our own wilful deeds of evil.

It is very true that when we become lovers of specific evil by practising it, the love sustains and strengthens the practice. We addict ourselves to drinking or to gambling till we love it, and then we drink or gamble because we love it. The effect becomes a cause, the resultant love becomes a mighty motive ; and so we weave webs around ourselves, we bind ourselves with chains and fetters of our own forging, till nothing remains for us but to "lie down in sorrow."

It is very true also that though we come into the world without thoughts and feelings, without aims and practices, we do not long remain so. Sensation begins at once ; perceptions of external things soon follow ; the pain and desire of appetite are speedily felt ; and so the development proceeds till the whole circle of thinking, feeling and willing is completed. Where the light of revelation clearly

shines, either choice for God or neglect of God takes place, in childhood or youth. If the soul, with its wants and longings, does not turn to God, at his command and call, under the conviction and attraction of his Spirit, it embraces the world, practises evil and loves it, and then practises the evil it loves more and more. The distance from God increases at every step, evil love continually strengthens, and so the "evil man waxes worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." The progress is downward and easy, with constantly increasing momentum; and is either stopped by the sinner's submission to God for salvation, under the full flow of divine communication, influence and discipline, or is accelerated and confirmed to the end of life, the bitter and terrible end.

The more we study Christ's words to Nicodemus, the more we discern their discriminating and comprehensive wisdom. From the universality of divine agency in the gift of Christ for the salvation of the world, our Lord passes to the particularity of human agency in the belief that saves and the unbelief that destroys. From the personality of faith and unbelief, in the region of revelation, he passes to the freedom of man's agency throughout the world. Our belief of the truth depends, first of all, on the coming or communication of the truth to us; but when the truth comes, are we really and truly free in receiving or rejecting it? And if the truth does not come to us directly and fully, if it comes only in the imperfect reflection of the light of conscience or the light of preparatory law, are we free and responsible in our religious conduct and condition? With what wonderful wisdom our blessed Lord answers these questions, by plainly indicating that all men are in light, that the guilt of any man is something in

the heart against the light, and that the guilty love of the heart is the consequence of evil deeds, evil choice, uncompelled practices, the unnecessitated pursuit of evil aims and ways.

And now, with the light of this widest view of human character and accountability, we can intelligently return to the narrower circle of gospel lands, to ascertain how far, or in what sense, faith and unbelief are voluntary and therefore justly adjudicable. Every human conscience, every just government, recognizes choice as the ultimate and only adjudicable thing. Nothing is really blamable or rewardable but choice, provided we take choice to embrace its known or knowable consequences. As the cause is answerable for the effect so choice is answerable for its consequences. If I kindle a fire, I must answer for the known or knowable results. If I inflict a wound, I must give account for the known or knowable issue. If I lay a train and ignite it, I am justly held responsible for the consequent and foreseeable injury to possessions and persons. Faith and unbelief are not themselves volitions or elections but consequences of choice, and as such justly adjudicable. Whether we take faith in the intellectual sense, as assent or credence, or in the emotional sense, as trust or confidence, it is not choice ; for choosing is quite distinct from thinking or feeling. Choosing means only intention or the action that fulfils it. But though faith is not a choice, it is the fruit of choice. Men generally believe in agreement with their predominant love and hatred, and these, as we have seen, spring from choice. Belief of truth usually results from using the means of ascertaining truth ; and the use of such means is voluntary. If we thoroughly study history, we shall believe its well-attested facts. If we study science, we shall discern and accept its facts and

forms. If we rightly use the means of ascertaining the truth, we shall come to the knowledge or belief of the truth; if we neglect the means or inadequately use them, we shall be ignorant and unbelieving. The cause, in such a case, is our own voluntary use or disuse of the means of truth; the consequence, in such a case, is also ours, our own knowledge or ignorance of the truth, our own belief or disbelief of the truth; and as we are answerable for the cause so are we answerable for the consequence. The use or disuse of the means is our own free choice, our own untrammelled, unnecessitated election; and the consequence is also ours, our heart-choice, our moral possession, for which we are justly accountable and adjudicable, and from which we cannot in equity escape. It is utterly erroneous and misleading to say that a man is no more accountable for his belief than for his complexion. He is accountable for all his intentions and actions and for all their consequences, according to his light; and he is accountable for all omissions of intentions and actions for which he had light, and for all the consequences of such omissions. He is accountable for all that he is by his own election, he is accountable for all that he might be by his own election, to the amount of his light or of his opportunities and abilities; and to gainsay or question this is to assail the very foundation of all moral relationship and rule.

Why is faith so often specified, in this conversation, in connection with life? It is not specified in connection with the regeneration of the first part, though the want of it in Nicodemus is complained of;* but it is specified in each of the other three parts, and in the very same words in the

* John iii. 11, 12.

second and third: "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." This is not tautology, for Christ never repeats without reason or uses words without meaning. Faith is mentioned, in the second part of the conversation, as the measure of actual salvation, determining its limits; in the third part as the method of salvation, determining its gratuitousness; and in the fourth part as the morality or moral means of salvation, accounting for its limits.

In the second part, Christ is lifted up on the cross to be the public means of salvation; but to how many? Not actually to all, for all are not actually saved, but to as many as believe, just as the elevated or public serpent was the means of life to as many as looked at it. And so elsewhere, John says the same thing: "As many as received him, to them gave he power [or privilege] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name;" that is, as many as believe in him, neither more nor less, are saved and become the children of God. The extent of faith in Christ is the extent of actual salvation by Christ, in the case of all those to whom Christ is made known. Believing necessarily implies something to be believed, some report or testimony; and accordingly, Christ carefully limits his censures and forewarnings and promises to those that know them. "Every one that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not;" "he that heard and did not;" "when any one heareth the word of the kingdom and hath not understood it;" "he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me;" "I testify unto every one that heareth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." So Isaiah says respecting Christ—"Who hath believed our report?" And so Paul asks—"How can they believe in him of whom they

have not heard?"* The extent of faith in Christ is the extent of actual salvation by Christ, *among those and those only to whom Christ is somehow made known*. Faith has no function of limitation in the case of those to whom Christ is not reported, since they cannot "believe in him of whom they have not heard;" and therefore their condition and destiny must be determined by some other rule. Just as "what the law saith, it saith to those that are under the law" and to no others, so what the gospel says of the efficacy and necessity of faith in Christ, it says to those only to whom it comes; but those beyond cannot be judged by such saying.

In the third part of this conversation, faith is mentioned as evidencing the gratuitousness of salvation, and therefore denoting the grace or love of God. "It is of faith that it might be by grace;" and accordingly "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* in him [not whosoever worketh or deserveth] should not perish but have everlasting life." God's love to the world appears partly in the gratuitousness of salvation, and the gratuitousness appears in the bestowal of salvation on the simple condition of faith in the Son of God. Because salvation is by faith without deeds of law, it is perfectly free; and because it is perfectly free, it proves and illustrates the love and liberality of the Giver.

In the fourth part of this conversation, faith is specified for a different purpose; not as the measure of actual salvation, determining its extent under the gospel; not as the divine method of salvation, evincing its gratuitousness; but as the morality or moral means of salvation, indicating

* John i. 12; Mt. vii. 26; Luke vi. 49; Mt. xiii. 19; John v. 24; Rev. xxii. 18; Isa. liii. 1; Ro. x. 14.

the freedom and responsibility of the sinner, who is saved if he believes, or perishes if he disbelieves. Why should salvation, in gospel lands, be limited to believers? Because believing is free man's free acceptance of salvation, and unbelief is free man's free rejection of it. Man can be saved only according to the nature that God has given him; and as God has made him a moral being, which largely means a free being, he cannot be saved without accepting salvation. God has fixed the method of accepting salvation as faith, in consonance with his own grace and with man's condition. Salvation by believing is salvation by grace, and so God is glorified; salvation by believing is the salvation of one so fallen that he cannot fulfil the law, but can, with the help afforded him, believe, and so man is redeemed. Whoever persists in believing persists in accepting salvation, and shall live forever: whoever persists in disbelieving persists in rejecting salvation, and of necessity perishes. He perishes by his own act or choice, and has only himself to blame. This is what is meant in the fourth part, when it is said—"He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God," that is, because, voluntarily, he has not believed in the Saviour proclaimed to him, and that Saviour God. Such a one flees to the pit and none can stay him; he chooses his portion and no one can hinder; he will not have life, and therefore he must die. There is no power in the universe to save him. Power to save from sin & free intelligence that will not be saved is a contradiction. No one is compelled, no one can be compelled, either to believe or disbelieve. Believing is the result of right choice, according to God's word; and disbelieving is the result of wrong choice. Each is per-

sonal and voluntary ; and both sufficiently account for the limitation of actual salvation. If I am actually saved, it is because, with the light and help afforded me, I accept the salvation of divine grace by believing in Christ ; and if I am not actually saved, it is because, with all the light and help afforded me, I do not believe in Christ for salvation. My unbelief is the fruit of my own choice, my own evil doings, my own wilful neglect of the means of faith and salvation ; and for this I am justly responsible and punishable.

What is said in the eighteenth verse about not believing accounts for condemnation in gospel lands ; and what is said in the next verse accounts for condemnation in all other lands. He that believes not the divine report of Christ is justly condemned ; and so is he that persists in doing evil, from the heart and by choice, against his light, whether his light be twilight or starlight or moonlight or noonlight. This covers the whole world-field. The choice of faith limits actual salvation in gospel lands ; the choice of well-doing, according to light, limits actual salvation in all other lands. Of the man that hears the gospel, it must be said—"He can be saved through faith ;" and of every other man it must be said, as concerning Cain—"If he does well, shall he not be accepted? And if not, sin lieth at the door." The believing and the well-doing are practically equivalent or morally tantamount to each other.

§ 4. *Religion is Practical.*

"Their deeds [or works] were evil. Every one that doeth evil. . . He that doeth truth."—John iii. 19, 20, 21.

Everything in the universe is either moral or physical, that is, either moral or unmoral, either capable or in-

capable of moral action ; and every moral being in the universe is either good or evil. To say of anything that it is neither good nor evil is to say that it is simply physical, that it ranks with a stone or a vegetable or a brute, and can never rise higher. The law of the whole universe is the distinction of the moral and the physical ;* and the law of the moral universe is the distinction of good and evil : The first is the universal law of dualistic contrast, that admits of no exception ; the second is the law of dualistic antagonism, that admits of no neutrality. The head and glory, the crown and climax, of the universe is moral excellence, which is in God, without beginning or limitation or change. All that he has created is either like himself or unlike. Whatever is like him or bears his image is his child, his moral offspring ; whatever is unlike him is his servant, his physical or non-moral production, whether it be living or lifeless. God is the fountain and type of being, and every moral creature is either like him as good, or unlike him as evil ; and accordingly, Christ bids us be the children, the imitators, of our Father in heaven, in his all-embracing and benignant love.† Men and angels are the only moral beings we know of ; angels only by testimony ; men by consciousness, testimony and observation.

Nothing is moral but the choice of a moral being and its known or knowable consequences ; or, in other words, what is moral is voluntary, either in itself or in its cause. The cause is always answerable for the consequence. The effect of moral causation or choice is moral ; the effect of physical force or operation is physical. Thinking or feeling is moral as the consequence of moral choice, but not

* Using the word physical as opposed to moral and not as equivalent to material. † Matthew v. 44-48.

otherwise, because it is not itself choice or volition. There are only two sorts of choice, intention and action. Intention, purpose, design, aim, determination or resolution, is preparatory choice, prospective or prospicient volition, legislative election ; and the action that fulfils it is accomplished choice, effective volition, executive election. There is or can be no other sort of choice. There cannot be a moral being like man, standing in various relationships, without activity, the activity or change that we call choice, change from one purpose to another, or from one performance to another, or from purpose to its complementary performance ; in other words, a moral being cannot be stagnant or lifeless, without choice or change, without aim or effort, which is the same as to say that there cannot be a moral being without intending and doing either good or evil. He may choose either good or evil, but he cannot refrain from choosing something. Not to choose good, when the occasion or opportunity of good arises, is evil. Even if every fellow-creature were absent and inaccessible, we should still have to choose good or evil in relation to the Lord and Giver of life. "He that is not with me," says Christ, "is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth :—" "He that is not against us is for us."* Christ is so all-related, all-controlling, all-possessing, that we cannot be neuters before him. Not to be against him is to be with him, in the sense that he legislatively gives to this expression. We cannot be neutral, for he owns us and claims us ; and we cannot be both with him and against him, on account of the direct and essential antagonism of good and evil, right and wrong, and on account of the fact that he himself is the embodiment of right and good.

* Matthew xii. 30 ; and Mark ix. 40.

Christ to Nicodemus recognizes this moral dualism, this good and evil, and recognizes it as practical. The men that God condemns are men of evil deeds or works, the men whose evil choice results in unbelief. As the consequence of evil choice is unbelief so the consequence of right or good choice, in the light of revelation, is faith. There can be neither faith nor unbelief without choice; the choice of the means of truth that ends in the belief of the truth, or the choice of the neglect of the means of truth that ends in the disbelief or ignorance of the truth; the choice of doing good that ends in the love of God or the choice of doing evil that ends in the love of evil. Such choice always proceeds under divine supervision and influence, for God never relinquishes the curatorship of his creatures; and over his whole human family in this world, he never ceases to rule redemptively. His good Spirit's emblem is the wind, the universal wind, that blows in every land and may be heard by every ear. He everywhere has sway, and never leaves himself without witness.

True religion is not a mere speculation or sentiment, mere knowledge or emotion, but choice, consisting of noblest ends by noblest means. Its great aim is to be conformed to the image or likeness of the Son of God; and its efforts for this aim are all comprised in the Son's teaching and example. To become Christ's by believing in him, and to be like Christ, by living as he lived, are really what true religion means. This doubtless comprehends "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" and "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us." The use of such light is to lead us to God, and the value of such love is to make us godlike and to animate and impel us in "the work of the

Lord." As "God's fellow-labourers, God's tillage, God's building,"* as the holy offspring of the Holy Spirit, as the princely children of the King immortal, eternal, invisible, we are to be heartily and practically on the side of the truth and the right.

The practicality of true religion, as the result of grace through faith, pervades the Bible; and is most conspicuous in the Biblical place where grace is most abundant. What teacher is so practical as the Master himself, throughout the four gospels? The more doctrinal any epistle is the more practical it is also; the more evangelical, the more preceptive; the more it tells us of grace and faith, the more it teaches us about holy living. The epistles to the Romans and Hebrews may be specially cited in proof of this. The very epistle in which Paul so clearly and copiously teaches the world's depravity, redemptive righteousness and justifying faith, is the very epistle in which he chiefly teaches renewal in righteousness and the works and ways of holiness. The very epistle that shows us the inability of the law to save us, and the superiority and sufficiency of Christ's priesthood, is the epistle that pre-eminently shows us the activities and achievements, and service, of the life of faith. So it is also in the epistle to the Galatians. The more we see, in any part of Scripture, of the divine source of our salvation, the more we see also of the human stream of inward and outward holiness. An unholy or inactive Christian is an anomaly and contradiction. Man is a workman, life is his work-day, and the world is his field. "Go, work to-day in my vineyard" is the voice of God everywhere, in his written and published word. "Labour not," says Christ, "for the meat which perisheth, but for that

* 1 Co. iii. 9, revised by Alford.

meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you : for him hath God the Father sealed. . . If any man serve me, let him follow me ; and where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

§ 5. *Evil practice Shuns detection.*

“ For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved ” or detected. — John iii. 20.

The men of the world, men without God, are appropriately denoted as evil-doers. They do evil by purposing it and practising it, having, in many instances, “ left off to be wise and to do good.” They do evil before God by the disregard of his commands and claims, for they refuse to submit to his redeeming grace, to return at his call, for reinstatement in his favour and likeness ; and they do evil before men. “ A foe to God was ne’er true friend to man.” “ This commandment have we from God, that he who loveth God love his brother also.” “ He that doeth evil hath not seen God ”† Evil-doers co-operate in evil and “ fight against God.” “ He that is not with me,” says Christ, “ is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.” “ No man can serve two masters,” and no man can be without some master. Every one that refuses to serve God serves Satan. Not to love God is to love Mammon. To despise salvation is to hold to sin : to hate righteousness is to love evil. In the mighty warfare of the universe, every moral being belongs in reality to one of the two great hostile camps, however he may deceive

* John vi. 27 and xii. 26. † 1 John iv. 21 and 3 John 11.

himself by the vain imagination of neutrality or of delayed decision. Not to decide for God is to decide for evil ; not to be enlisted under the banner of Christ is to fall off to the foe and serve the powers of darkness. We may be neutral or undecided in relation to some forms of evil, some methods of selfishness and worldliness, but there can be no neutrality or indecision on the part of any man, in relation to the great antagonism between good and evil, Heaven and Hell.

“ Every one that doeth evil hateth the light ” ; and to hate the light is to hate manifestation, for “ that which maketh manifest is light. ” To hate the light is to love the darkness, and “ so men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. ” The love of moral darkness and the hatred of moral light are inseparable and mutually complementary. The human heart is a magnet, whose opposite poles are love and hatred. Dr. Johnson’s liking for a good hater was founded in the nature and reason of things, for a good hater is a good lover, and a good hater and lover is forceful and decided. Men love darkness and hate light by their own choice, as the result of their own evil practice ; and therefore have only themselves to blame. The evil worker shuns detection and discovery. We cannot do evil without knowing it, and to know that we do evil is to be self-condemned. As moral beings, we writhe under the condemnation of our own conscience ; as social beings, we shrink from the condemnation of our fellows ; and as created beings, we dread the condemnation of God. The evil-doer hates the light that would expose him still more fully to himself and to the condemnation of men, and that by exposing his selfish designs would defeat them ; and therefore he avoids religious instruction, conversation and company and the

scrutinizing eye. He keeps aloof from the wise and good, and cowers in the shade from the presence and the eye of God, as our guilty first parents endeavoured to hide themselves among the trees of the garden. He masks and cloaks himself, courts solitude and darkness; and either flees when no man pursues or skulks in secret when no man watches, for a guilty conscience "makes cowards of us all."

Our Lord discloses to Nicodemus the chief root of men's neglect and dislike of revealed truth. "He that doeth evil hateth the light." Men hate the Bible because it is the light of God that exposes and condemns their sins of heart and life. "The world hateth me because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil." If the Bible was simply a book of ancient history, impartial biography, Hebrew law, eastern antiquities and customs, beautiful or lofty poetry, wise sentences, skilful comparisons, sagacious conversation, able letters, wondrous foresight and forecast, they could admire and recommend it; but because it is much more than all this, because it is at war with all impurity and inculcates thorough holiness of heart and life, recognizing only the blessedness of godliness, the evil-doers hate it. They are against it because it is against them. It leaves them neither cloak nor excuse for their sins, because it detects their sins in root and branch, and shows them the means of salvation. It exposes the inanity of external or occasional religion, the rottenness of worldly morality, the emptiness and frivolity of fashionable pleasures; it leaves the neglecter of revealed truth and redeeming grace no foundation to build on, no prop to lean on, no refuge to flee to, no goodness to boast of, no real joy to revel in or hope for. Such a book as this exasperates every man that clings to evil ways, and will not submit to God's righteous authority and re-

deeming love. And as he hates the light, he will not come to the light, lest his deeds should be detected. He keeps away from evangelic truth by neglecting the Bible and shunning the preaching of the gospel: "These preachers say nothing good of me, but evil; this book contains nothing for me but reproach and menace; and I will have nothing to do with them." Wilmot, the infidel, when dying, laid his trembling emaciated hand upon the sacred volume, and exclaimed solemnly and with unwonted energy—"The only objection against this book is a bad life."

The concealment and cowardice of conscious guilt admit of endless illustration, from the day that Adam and Eve loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. When the sons of Jacob sold their brother into slavery, they concealed it with falsehood. When Achan stole some of the spoils of Jericho, he hid them in his tent. When Saul resorted to the sin of witchcraft, he chose disguise and the night. To get rid of competition, Joab murdered Abner under false pretences. By murderous deceit, David obtained the wife of Uriah. By hypocritical patriotism, Absalom won the country from his father. When Jezebel would plunder Naboth for her husband, she resorted to false evidence and deceptive forms. Gehazi vainly imagined himself safe from detection, when, under false pretences, he received the coveted money and goods of Naaman. Haman veiled his hatred to Mordecai and his people under loyalty to the king. The enemies of Daniel secretly planned his overthrow but falsely pretended to magnify the royal power. Herod hid his purpose to destroy the infant King under a pretended desire to worship him. In the darkness of secret bribery, the Jewish authorities sought the destruction of Jesus of Nazareth, and in the

darkness of the night sent men to seize him. As it was in the ages of biblical history so it has been ever since. Wickedness is deceitful, dark and cowardly. Its hatred is the light, its fondness is for darkness, its dread is detection. False appearances, secrecy and night are its congenial choice and habitual means. "With their tongue they have used deceit."

But the detection and punishment of persistent wickedness are certain and inevitable. "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid that shall not be known." "The Lord will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." *

§ 6. *Good works Openly glorify God.*

"But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God."—John iii. 21.

What is truth? This is a question more easily and more frequently asked than answered; and yet a question that ought to be answered. Pilate might have had an answer from the Divine Embodiment of truth, had he desired it and waited for it. Truth is the assertion or indication of reality. It is the assertion of reality when it takes the form of a proposition; otherwise, it is simply the indication of reality. When I assert, according to fact, that I see a human form before me or that a pleasant sound breaks upon my ear, I assert a reality, and my assertion of reality is truth; when I say—"See that man" or "listen

* Mt. x. 26; 1 Cor. iv. 5; Ecc. xii. 14.

to the music," or in answer to the traveller's inquiry for the right road, point with my finger to a particular road, I indicate a reality, and my indication of reality is truth. Reality itself is not truth ; the man I see or the sound I hear or the road I indicate is not truth. Neither is my notion or perception of reality truth ; my visual perception of a form or my aural perception of a sound is not truth ; or, in other words, truth is not the mere conformity of notions to things. In spite of etymology, truth is not what a man troweth—thinketh or believeth—for men often believe or think what is utterly unreal. Truth always means communication, yet not every sort of communication. To one absolutely solitary, or without any communication, there is reality, there is knowledge, but not truth. Truth is social, not solitary ; truth means utterance or indication, not silence and seclusion ; truth is the name for the communication of reality. Whether we assert reality by a proposition or denote it by some sign or indication, the process is communication, the process is truth, and we ourselves are truthful ; and as language is the great means of communication, it may be generally said that truth is the linguistic communication of reality.

In this account of truth, reality must be taken to mean the truth-teller's knowledge of reality. There is only one Being in the universe whose knowledge of reality is absolutely accurate and complete ; ours is limited and imperfect. Both in sensation and testimony we are sometimes deceived. We may examine facts or interpret words amiss ; and what we call our knowledge may be rather our error. Hence the necessity of some additional distinctions respecting our communications with each other. Asserting or indicating reality (our knowledge of reality) is truth ; asserting or

indicating the misapprehension of reality or the belief of unreality is error, and may be called falsity without implicating motives. But "truth" has an ethical meaning as well as this psychological one. Communicating unreality as reality, without any intention to deceive, or in mere ignorance or mistake, is simply error or psychological falsity; but doing it knowingly, or with intention to deceive, is mendacity, falsehood or lying, which really means an intentional endeavour to create erroneous belief. As the opposite of knowledge is either ignorance or error, so the opposite of mendacity is veracity, which means an intentional endeavour to create the belief of reality.

Either from disregard to such distinctions as these, or under worse influence, innocent men have been falsely accused, unjustly condemned, and even capitally punished. Civil rulers have not only blasphemously usurped the judgment of conscience that belongs to God alone, but they have punished error as lying, misapprehension as perversion, religious ignorance or mistake as wilful rejection and denial of the truth, and even the belief of reality as error or infidelity. So Rome has murdered thousands, so Calvin burned Servetus, so even England has harassed and slain good men. It is time for "vain man, decked in a little brief authority," to let conscience alone, and to understand that error and honesty may be friends, that mistake is not mendacity, that want of knowledge is not wickedness, that "orthodoxy is not my 'doxy, and heterodoxy your 'doxy," that testifying what we believe to be the truth of God is both beyond the scope of the civil magistrate's adjudication and beyond the right of any man to stigmatize as impiety or sin.

What our Lord means by "truth" or rather "the truth"

(την αληθειαν) is not truth in general but the truth of God respecting his Son, the truth of man's redemption by Christ Jesus, the truth of divine revelation in the law, the prophets and the psalms, divine truth that was then already written and to be written, God's own testimony to men, the truth of the gospel of the grace of God, the divine assertion or indication, through accredited messengers, of the realities of God's redemptive government of the world by his Son. This is the truth of the Father's "word," through which Jesus prays him to "sanctify" his disciples. This is the truth whose knowledge makes men "free." Jesus calls himself "the truth" because he is the great REALITY of divine communications and the great COMMUNICATOR ; and because his Spirit testifies of this reality he is called "the Spirit of truth." This is "the truth of the gospel," "the word of truth," "the truth of God," "the truth of Christ," and emphatically and pre-eminently "the truth."

This truth is practical, both as testimony to be believed and precept to be fulfilled. The faith that receives God's testimony works by love, and love fulfils the law ; and so the very doctrines and promises of Scripture are practical. That precepts are practical is beyond all question. And so a Christian man, a disciple of Christ, is one "that doeth truth." "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass : for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."* In the moral antagonism of Christ's kingdom, as it appears

* James i. 22-25.

in this conversation, the opposite of evil-doing is not called good-doing or well-doing, but truth-doing, and with design and significance, because in our imperfect state, it is the truth of God that distinguishes and determines the good we ought to do; and above all, in our subjection and devotion to our Heavenly Father, we are to do his will and not our own; and as his will is in his word, our great business in the world is to "do the truth of God." Christ came not into the world to do his own will but the will of Him that had sent him; and we are to have the mind of Christ and tread in his steps, "walking in the truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father."

"He that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest." To come to the light, in these words, is to become known, to be "made manifest," to seek publicity or acquaintance, not concealment; in contrast with the evil-doer, who hates and avoids the light, lest his deeds should be detected. In other Scripture places, light and truth appear to be identical. Christ is the Light of the world (the Life is the light of men), because he gives the world the truth of God, the knowledge of God, without which the world is in deepest darkness. In the nineteenth verse of this conversation, the light that is come into the world is the light of Christ, the light of the truth of Christ, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; and the opposite darkness is the religious ignorance and error and uncleanness that evil-doers love. But in the twenty-first verse, "the truth" stands for the knowledge of God and "light" for the knowledge of man. "He that doeth the truth [of God] cometh to the light [of men], that his deeds may be made manifest" to men. Coming to the the light of men is

exactly equivalent to being made manifest to men ; and, accordingly, the meaning of our Lord is that a godly man is not only undisguised but seeks to be known. He not only wears no cloak or mask, and buries himself in no retreat or cell, but he comes to the light. He does not wait for men to find him out but he finds them out, he puts himself in communication with them. He has a testimony to deliver to them, and he seeks to deliver it. He has a mission to fulfil among them, and he seeks to fulfil it.

If this looks like ostentation, the appearance is entirely changed when we learn the motive. "He comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, **THAT THEY ARE WROUGHT IN GOD.**" Here is the great secret of the Christian's excellence and intercourse. His deeds are not wrought in himself, by his own strength and skill and for his own glory, or wrought in the world, to agree with the world, to please the world or to win the world ; but **IN GOD**, originated and enabled by the grace of God, ruled and regulated by the word of God, and in entire subservience to the glory and praise of God. The Christian man neither lives nor dies to himself, but to Christ. As bought with a price and therefore not his own, he glorifies God in his body.* It is for God's honour and man's welfare he comes to the light or makes himself manifest to men. How is the grace of God to be glorified in him, unless it appears to his fellows ; and how can it appear in secrecy ? He is a steward of the truth of God, to impart it to his fellows ; and therefore he must come to them or find them out. Like the demoniac delivered from the legion, he has to tell how great things the Lord has compassionately done for him. He has to let his light shine before men, that they

* 1 Cor. vi. 20. "The words—'and in your spirit which are God's'—are wanting in almost all our earliest authorities."—Alford.

may glorify God by seeing his good works in God. Each Christian is, in part, the light of the world and the salt of the land, and must therefore come into contact and intercourse with mankind. The Christian religion is not the religion of seclusion, of monasteries and nunneries, of scornful anti-philistinism, of selfish "sweetness and light," but of society, activity, adaptation, beneficence, aggressiveness, diffusiveness, to all the world and to every creature. It is a mission of mercy to all mankind. It is the conquest and culture of the world for the glory of God. While there is a human soul uninstructed and unsaved, the work of Christian manifestation, communication, collision and conquest, radiation and recovery, is to go on. The Christian with his divine life, with his written Bible and oral gospel, with his spoken testimony and illustrative example, with his works of faith and labours of love, with his plans and practices for men's salvation, is to be "made manifest," that his deeds are wrought in God, "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

True religion, then, is to be practised, professed and promoted. It is private in its origin and public in its issue. The seed of the kingdom grows in the depths of the soil, where the sower had cast it, where the sunshine and shower nourish it, and where no human eye sees it; but it also bursts upon the world with its rising stem, its spreading branches, its graceful leaves and flowers, its ripe and precious fruit. True religion is for the man that has it and for every one that sees it or can be persuaded to it. Like its Master, it must work the works of God and not be hidden in a corner, till it becomes "an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations."

CHAPTER V.

IMPLICATIONS.

§ 1. *The Glory of Life.*

FOR the full estimation and enjoyment of the wondrous words of Christ to Nicodemus, it is not enough to go through them, exegetical'y, with reverent steps and slow ; we must also return and review. We must grasp the outline as well as dwell on the details. We must study what is involved as well as what is evolved. We must lovingly linger on the more salient points and the grander features. We must gather up the particulars in their convergent tendencies and concentrative influences. We must not only listen to the successive notes of this mighty music, but yield ourselves up to its majestic swell. Its tones are sweet and clear, but the full volume is Heaven's own harmony.

In all veritable and valuable communications, something is implied as well as expressed. Every building implies the foundation. Every effect implies its cause. Every stream implies its rise and its discharge. And so what this great conversation implies as well as expresses should command our most attentive and thankful regard. Both the truth on the surface and the truth beneath are worthy of Him who spake as never man spake.

The theme of the whole conversation is spiritual and divine life. The very first thing Jesus tells Nicodemus of is a new birth, the beginning of new life ; and all that he says, in the first part of his conversation, is in illustration

and vindication of this vital inception. In the second part, his own coming decease is compared with the elevation of the serpent in the wilderness, as the public means to the believer of everlasting life. In the third part, the end of the Father's munificent love, in the gift of his Son, is everlasting life, the life of salvation for the world. In the fourth part, the end of faith in the Son of God is the non-condemnation of life, in contrast with the death-condemnation of the unbelieving and evil-doing ; and the fruit of this faith is the activity of a life in God, that courts the light. From beginning to end, true religion is life. Every aspect, relation and detail are vital.

But what is life ? It is the secret of God and the mystery of the universe. We are ourselves alive and the world around us is teeming with life ; and yet we know not what it is. It defies all human analysis and scrutiny. It baffles the most acute and accomplished philosopher. It is the shadow of God, the living One ; his noblest produce, his greatest work. A single instance of life transcends all the masses and multitudes, all the order and array, of material organization. What avails the magnificence of planets and comets, of suns and stars, throughout the depths of space, without life to utilize and crown it ? But life is everywhere, from the simplest moss or tiniest shell to the noblest forms of vegetable and animal vitality, for the service and benefit of living man.

For all practical purposes it may be said that the life of the body consists in its union with the soul. "As the body without spirit is dead,"* so the soul without God is dead. As the body united to spirit is alive, so the spirit united to God is alive. And as the life of the body

* James ii. 26.

consists in its union with the soul, so the life of the soul consists in its union with God. The body is for the spirit, and the spirit is for its Author and Lord. Man by nature is "without God" and dead; but man reunited to God by "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" is alive. This and only this is true religion; not postures and forms, not vestments and decorations, not signs and ceremonies, not societies and services. Reunion with God is what true religion consists of, and everything else in religion is but its instrument and issue.

As the body and the spirit are one so the believer and Christ are one. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." What more can be said of the grandeur of true religion? Oneness with God—vital union with the majesty on high—intimacy and fellowship with the Father of spirits! We can think of nothing higher; there can be nothing higher. This is the beauty of God in man, the majesty of God overarching and enfolding man, the fineness of God in man forever. The man that knows this can know nothing to envy. He is of the seed royal; his lineage is divine; his kindred are on high; and there too, in due time, he himself shall be. What if he is now in his minority? He shall soon be of age. What if in this tabernacle he groans, being burdened? He shall soon have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. What if he is here a tenant at will? God will soon give him "that which is his own." What if the world know him not? He shall soon "shine as the sun in the kingdom of his Father."

Men talk proudly of their kinship with the titled and illustrious of mankind, boasting perhaps that the blood of kings and queens is in their veins; but forgetting that

God "has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth," that we are all sprung from Adam, that the distinctions of earth and life are superficial and temporary, that death levels all such inequalities, and that a common grave awaits the rich and the poor. But it is a glory, a glory no tongue can tell and no heart understand, to be born of God, to be in kinship with high Heaven, to have the divine nature in us, to be the dwelling-place of the Deity, to be his sons and daughters, to hold fellowship with the living Summit and Centre of the universe, to be the predestined inheritors of all that is God's, to look out on blazing suns and sparkling stars and rushing comets and countless worlds; and know that our own Father made them all, that we have a child's portion in them all, that we are filially free of the universe, that soon we shall emerge from our minority and obscurity, throwing off our cumbrous clay, and not only "sweep through the gates" into the metropolis of the universe, but find our field of expectation and activity forever in our Father's vast domains, and our eternal dwelling-place by his side and in his heart.

"A house we call our own,
Which cannot be overthrown :
In the general ruin-ure,
Storms and earthquakes it defies ;
Built in no abode secure,
Built eternal in the skies.

"High on Immanuel's land,
We see the fabric stand :
From a tottering world remove
To our steadfast mansion there :
Our inheritance above
Cannot pass from heir to heir."

§ 2. *The Agency of Life.*

Divine life alone is uncreate and eternal ; all other life belongs to time, and springs from God. Human life involves agency, the agency of flesh for fleshly life, and the agency of spirit for spiritual life. The latter is both Divine and Human, as this conversation plainly imports.

The life-giving agency of God is denoted throughout the conversation, but appears particularly in the first three parts ; and the life-receiving agency of man is denoted throughout, but appears particularly in the fourth part. In the first part, the agency of God is generative, in the second redemptive, in the third originative ; and is recognized in the fourth, in the mention of God and his only-begotten Son. In the fourth part, the agency of man is antithetically distinguished as that of believing and practising the truth or of disbelieving and doing evil ; and it is also denoted in the believing of the first three parts : "Ye receive not our witness . . . ye believe not . . . that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."* So the divine and the human are distinguished throughout the Bible. Salvation is by the divine agency of grace through the human agency of faith. Christ gives rest to every comer, yoke-bearer and learner. He would give life to all, but many will not come to him, though he calls and draws them. The Father gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Jesus gathers men to himself, as a hen gathers her brood, when they consent to be gathered, when they submit to be saved. God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, even beseeching them to be recon-

* Va. 10, 11, 12, 15, 16.

ciled ; but many will not consent. The two agencies are continually expressed or implied, whether or not we duly discriminate them. Without our consent we are ransomed, but not without our consent are we actually restored. The water of life is divinely-provided, and if we will, we take it freely ; just as in the conversation with Nicodemus, spiritual life is at once the offspring of God's Spirit and the end of man's faith.

The life-receiving agency of man is sometimes doubted and denied, on the ground that man is naturally dead to God and therefore cannot accept life from God. The dead, it is said, can do nothing, they can only have life put into them ; and therefore the agency of God alone is concerned in the restoration of man to life. Spiritual life in man, it is also said, is a resurrection or a creation to which God alone is competent. This sort of argument is partly the fruit of extreme views of man's natural state and of the figures that illustrate it, and partly the fruit of scanty views of redeeming grace. Man is fallen, so fallen as to be naturally without spiritual health and strength, without God ; but not so fallen as to be an unmitigated mass of depravity, not so fallen as to be incapable of becoming much worse, since "evil men shall wax worse and worse ;" not so fallen as to be incapable of thinking, feeling and choosing. And man is redeemed, but not so redeemed that Christ died only for part of mankind, and that his Spirit operates only on part, and that some are left without any gracious operation or aid. On the contrary, the grace of God "brings salvation to all men ;" and God is not only "good to all" but "his tender mercies are over all his works."* We know the influence of the Spirit on our-

* Titus ii. 11, and Psa. cxlv. 9.

selves as we hear the sound of the wind, but not on others, as we know not whence the wind comes or whither it goes ; and therefore we are not competent to pronounce judgment on others. Enough to know that God loves the world, and is not willing that any should perish, and has no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; that Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world and the true Light which lighteth every man ; and that his Spirit, like the universal wind blowing everywhere, convinces the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. No man therefore is without help and hope ; and even the dead by trespasses and sins can hear when God speaks, and turn from sin when he commands, and come to himself when he calls. " The hour is coming and now is, in which the dead [the spiritually dead] shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear [that not only listen but comply] shall live." It is as sinners, as fallen, as dead to God, that men are everywhere spoken to throughout the Bible. Man is not so far fallen from God and so neglected of God that he cannot understand God's communications, and consent to God's offer, and ask for God's mercy. He can not save himself or prepare himself to be saved, and he need not, for God both prepares and saves ; but he can resist the Holy Spirit or yield to him, he can submit to God's righteousness or reject it, he can turn to God who calls and draws, or wander away into the blackness of darkness for ever. To man therefore belongs a life-receiving agency. He does not spiritually live in order to begin to believe, but he believes to live. He is not saved for incipient faith, but by incipient faith he is saved. He does not practise evil by the resistless force of an inborn love of evil, (for there is neither moral good nor moral evil

in anything resistless), but he first loves evil because he does evil, and then practises it because he both chooses it and loves it, and so goes swiftly down to death ; or else, in compliance with God's command, he abstains from evil deeds, hears the voice of the Son of God, and believes and lives.

The apostle John calls faith in Christ the reception of Christ. "As many as receive him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name." The apostle Paul tells us that the design of the redemption of them that were under the law is "that we might receive the adoption of sons."* They that received Peter's word on the day of Pentecost were baptized.† "Whosoever receiveth me," says Christ, "receiveth not me but him that sent me ;" and "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."‡ "Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls."§ "Every one that asketh receiveth."|| "Ye receive not our witness," says Christ to Nicodemus, plainly implying that he could receive it. "I come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not."¶ "Whosoever will," whosoever chooses, "let him receive the water of life freely."** How can it be said that a life-receiving agency does not belong to man ? He must be saved, if saved at all, either freely or mechanically ; and as he is not a machine but a free intelligence, he is to be saved freely, and therefore on his own free reception of salvation. Believing in Christ is receiving Christ, and the reception of Christ is the reception of heavenly sonship,

* Gal. iv. v. † Acts ii. 41. ‡ Mark ix. 37 and x. 15.

§ 1 Pet. i. 9. || Mt. vii. 8. ¶ John v. 43.

** Rev xxii. 17. .

and heavenly sonship means a birth of God. It is God that gives life; it is man that either receives or rejects it. We receive it by repentance and faith; we reject it by persisting in sin and turning away from Christ.

The agency of man includes more than the reception of life, though this is its first operation. When we are made "alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," we are to begin the practical consecration of our new and growing life to the glory and praise of God. This is clearly indicated in the conclusion of the conversation. "He that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest that they are wrought in God." We receive life without any good works of our own, that we may henceforth work for God. Before our spiritual nativity, we work, without God, the works of darkness, but as soon as we are born of God we begin to work "in God," by practising the truth of God. "Whatsoever ye do, work it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men . . . serve ye the Lord Christ."* "Our Saviour Jesus Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify, unto himself only, a people zealous of good works;" and accordingly, we are "to practise good works for the necessary wants, that we be not unfruitful."†

The agency of man is life-receiving and life-applying. We first yield ourselves to God, under his gracious agency, by repentance and faith, that we may have abundant life; and then we devote that life in holiness to its Author and Lord. "Yield your members unto God as instruments of righteousness."

* Col. iii. 23, 24. Titus ii. 14 and iii. 14. Alford.

§ 3. *The Trinity of Life.*

The life-giving agency of God implies his essential, original, independent life. He is LIFE and gives life. Because he has life in himself, because "with him is the fountain of life," he can create or restore life. Does this conversation afford us any glimpse of the source of all realities and the greatest of all mysteries—the Life of God?

When we think and speak of God, the profoundest reverence becomes us. "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."* He is "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen or can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen."† Even the outer court of his works we should tread with solemnity; and in the inner court of his word we should listen with awe and love. When God speaks, every creature should keep silence: and whatever he is pleased to say of himself and his works should be thankfully and thoroughly pondered. Speculation respecting the infinite and eternal Nature is misplaced and unbecoming, where revelation determines. No human search can find out God. Only in his light can we see light.

Our Lord, in this conversation, teaches us the Trinity of the Godhead. In the first part, we learn that God the Spirit regenerates men; in the second, that God the Son ransoms men; in the third, that God the Father restores

* Ecc. v. 2. † 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16.

men, since he sends his Son not to judge them but to save them. In other words, we learn that we have spiritual life by the regenerating influence of God the Spirit, by the propitiatory influence of God the Son, and by the munificent influence of God the Father ; and therefore we have life as the offspring of the Three-One God. The Spirit of God is God ; the Son of God is God ; the Giver of the Son of God is God : Yet not three Gods but one God. Although, in the second part, the Ransomer of the serpent-bitten and dying is called the Son of man, because only as man could he die, his higher and divine nature is denoted in both the third part and the fourth, under the name of the only-begotten Son of God. As the son of man is man, the Son of God is God. The only-begotten Son of God, or the only-begotten God (as the reading of many ancient MSS. and authorities is in John i. 18), can possess nothing less than the essential nature of the Godhead. Between the Father and his only-begotten Son there must be Divinity in common. But even in the first part of the conversation, as we have seen, the divinity of Christ is denoted, in his perfect and personal knowledge of the highest and final heaven, and in his exclusive descent and ascent. The Father gives the Son to atone for the world ; the Son sends the Spirit to regenerate the world ; and the world is regenerated just so far as it consents to be regenerated, for no further than this could a world of moral beings be regenerated. " Here the whole Deity is known ;" and hence we sing—

"To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
Who sweetly all agree
To save a world of sinners lost,
Eternal glory be."

The Trinity of the Godhead is not taught here or else—

where, in the Bible, dogmatically or theoretically, but as involved or embodied in the redemption of mankind. So it is taught in the three parables of the lost sheep, the lost silver, and the lost son. So it is taught in the apostolic benediction,—in the grace of the Son, the love of the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. So it is taught in the method of access to God: "For through HIM we both have access by ONE SPIRIT unto the FATHER."* So it is taught in the baptismal commission, as if the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, the complete name of the Godhead, were intended to denote the completeness and finality of the Christian economy. The latter-day glory, in which we preach and baptize, is not the glory of the Father as in the Patriarchal era, or of the Son, as in the Jewish era, or of the Holy Spirit, as inaugurating and signalizing the new era, but of the Divine Pleroma, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Fulness of the Godhead in the fulness of time, for the ages of the ages; and therefore the baptism of men is in the name of the Supreme and Eternal Trinity.

And yet it is not an economic Trinity, a Trinity of offices and operations, that is meant in these various indications of the Divine Nature. The Spirit that cleanses like water and communicates like wind is a generating Spirit, to be known. The Son that is given and lifted up, to rescue the imperilled, is a Saviour to be learned of and believed in. The Father that gives the Son to save the world is the great loving Presence and Power to be "wrought in." Such language as this means more than names, more than relations to men, more than economic distinctions, more than recuperative operations. It means

* Eph. ii. 18.

that the living and true God is as really and truly three as one, though not three in the same sense as one. God is not a solitary eternal monad. Absolute solitude is incompatible with perfection and blessedness. God from eternity, in the essential distinctions and perfection of his own nature, is not without fellowship, though One ; he is social, not solitary ; and man was made in the social image of God, when he was made one and more, as well as in the intellectual, moral and rectoral image. The religion of our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus is not the religion of a solitary and silent God, either before creation or beyond its bounds. The communion of the Godhead is not dependent on creation (as Unitarianism implies) though finding some expression or illustration there, but belongs to the essential nature of the unapproachable Light and the unfathomable Perfection. And so the Son of God, in the greatest of all prayers, asks to be glorified by the Father himself with the glory which he had with him before the world was. And so, when he came to ransom the world, as a servant, he deemed not his equality with the Father a thing to be clung to.* And so, in the redemptive government of mankind, ONE, like a jasper and a sardine stone, is on the throne ; and before the throne are THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD ; and in the midst of the throne is A LAMB, as it has been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.†

“ This, this is the God we adore,
Our faithful unchangeable Friend,
Whose love is as great as his power,
And neither knows measure or end.”

* Revised version of Philipp. ii. 6. † Rev. chaps. iv. v.

This Triune God is LIFE. "The Father," "the living Father," "hath life in himself." Of "the Son of the living God" it is said—"This is the true God and eternal life," and his name is "the Word of Life." The Spirit is "the Spirit of life."* Life is not stagnancy or solitude; and accordingly the life of God is the life of Three in One and One in Three. "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." The Spirit works as the wind. This is the Infinite and Eternal Life; this is the inexhaustible and perpetual Fountain of Life.

§ 4. *The Course of Life.*

From the first part of this conversation we learn that what is necessary in true religion is the divine birth that begins it. From the second part we learn that no one can be born into the family of God without believing in the redeeming Son of God. From the third part we learn that without a living Sovereign there could be no redeeming Saviour. From the fourth part we learn that without opportunity of salvation there is no perdition. And from the whole we learn that true religion involves both Heaven and Earth, and is the result of two agencies, the Divine and the Human.

THE COURSE OF SAVING AGENCY is not from man to God but from God to man. "Salvation is of the Lord." The agency of the first three parts is divine—the Spirit, the Son and the Father; the agency of the fourth and last part is human—believing and doing the truth, or disbelieving and doing evil.

The course of divine agency is from the originative love

* John v. 26; 1 John v. 20 and i. 1; Ro. viii. 2.

of the Father, though the propitiative passion of the Son, to the regenerative power of the Spirit.

WHAT IS THE AGENCY OF THE FATHER? He seeks spiritual and true worshippers.* How does he seek them? By the loving and munificent gift of his Son for the salvation of the world.† By drawing men to his Son.‡ How does he draw them? By the influence of his Spirit, as with human cords and bands of love, that is, by purely moral means, by the attraction of his revealed love to men, and by such instructive, suasive and monitory means as belong to the best human ties or cords.§ He seeks spiritual and true worshippers by acknowledging his Son among men; by giving him the cup of expiation to drink; by raising him from the dead and greatly exalting him.||

WHAT IS THE AGENCY OF THE SON? It is the agency of MEDIATION. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." The mediation of Christ is twofold: mediatorial SERVITUDE and mediatorial SUPREMACY. The mediatorial servitude of Christ consists of *prophecy* and *priesthood*. A prophet represents God to men; a priest represents men to God. A prophet is the means of communication; a priest is the means of reconciliation. Christ came into the world in "the form of a servant." His whole ministry, from his baptism to his decease, was the fulfilment of his prophetic function: "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me." His sufferings in the garden and on the cross were the fulfilment of his priestly function: "Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek." But now, since his resurrection

* John iv. 23. † John iii. 16. ‡ John vi. 44. § Hos. xi. 4.
|| Mt. iii. 17; Mt. xvii. 5; John xviii. 11; Rom. i. 4; Phil. ii. 9.

and ascension, his work is that of mediatorial supremacy or sovereignty. Respecting his prophetic function, he says — “My doctrine [or teaching] is not mine, but his that sent me :”* “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me :” “I have not spoken of myself ; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak :”† “I have given unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world, the words which thou gavest me. . . I have given them thy word. . . Thy word is truth :”‡ “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.”§ Respecting his priestly function, he says by the psalmist “a body hast thou prepared me ;”|| to the Jews he says personally — “I am the living bread which came down from heaven : if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give [in priestly self-sacrifice] for the life of the world ;” and to the Father he says — “If it be possible let this cup pass from me ; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”¶ As the mediatorial servitude of Christ is twofold, prophetic and priestly, so the reward of his servitude is twofold, namely, his exaltation to the Sovereignty of the universe for the world’s salvation, and his pre-appointment to the Judgeship of the universe. On ceasing to be the mediatorial sovereign of the universe, by delivering up his mediatorial kingdom to the Father, he will judge the world in righteousness, and he will “judge angels ;” or, in other words, when restorative government is consummated by the general resurrection, conservative and retributive government will be resumed universally

* John vii. 16. † John vi. 38 ; xii. 49. ‡ John xvii. 8, 14, 17.

§ John vi 63. || Heb. x. 5. ¶ John vi. 51 ; Mat. xxvi. 39.

and forever ; and this resumption is confided to the Son, by the fore-appointment of the Father, as reward for mediatorial service. The Son, as mediator, is now King of the universe, in reward for his mediatorial servitude ; and the Son, as ex-mediator, shall be the Judge of the universe, as complementary reward for his servitude. Respecting his servitude generally, Christ says—" My Father is greater than I ;" respecting the exaltation of his sovereignty, he says—" All power is given unto me, in heaven and in earth ;" and respecting his fore-appointment to universal judgment, he says—" The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son," though not for present exercise, as he did not come to judge the world but to save the world.*

The glory of the personal life which the Son had with the Father, " before the world was," is not to be confounded with the fontal life of Christ as the Saviour of the world. Deeming equality with the Father a thing not to be clung to, when the world was to be redeemed, the Son of God took upon himself the form of a servant for prophetic ministration and for priestly suffering ; and is now, in consequence, " highly exalted," in princely power and authority in heaven and earth, to be the great mediatorial fountain of life to mankind. This is what Jesus means when he says—" As the Father hath life in himself so hath he given to the Son [the equality] to have life in himself," as the great " quickening Spirit," " quickening whom he will," from the Fall to the Resurrection ; and when this Fount-full Vitality has accomplished his purpose and work by the general resurrection, it will be seen that the Father " hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is

* John xiv. 28 ; Matt. xxviii. 18 ; John v. 22 and xii. 47.

the [self-sacrificing] Son of man."* The reward of his Servant-like humiliation, in the obedience of life, as the prophet, and in "the suffering of death," as the priest, is his glorious exaltation : first, as a redeeming prince, to save sinners and raise the dead for judgment ; and then as the great Judge of God's resumed and ceaseless conservative and retributive government, to weigh all moral character and award all retribution. Till he comes "to be our Judge," he is our prophetic counsellor, our priestly propitiator and our prince's deliverer. For this he has "life in himself ;" "in him is life ;" "the life is the light of men ;" he is "the bread of life," "the resurrection and the life," "the way, the truth and the life," the Prince of life," "our life," "made after the power of an endless life," "the Word of life," "the true God and eternal life." Because in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, he is the very Pleroma of life to a dying world. We receive of his fulness by believing in him, even "grace upon grace," without curtailment or cessation. No longer "alienated from the life of God," we have now abundant life in Christ, looking for the life of the body at the end of the world, and for "the life of the world to come," as the completion and crown of the divine purposes and promises.

The supremacy to which Christ is exalted is the sovereignty of the universe, which implies official and practical equality with the Father. This is denoted by his place at the Father's right hand, by his occupancy of the same throne, by his being the Pleroma, by his universal power and authority, by the supremacy of his name, by the adoration of the universe at the Father's command, and by his association with the Father in the gift of the Spirit.

* John v. 27.

The Father raised Christ "from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come ; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."* "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God [deemed not equality with God a thing to be clung to] ; but made himself of no reputation [emptied himself], and took upon him the form of a servant [as contradistinguished from 'the form of God'], and was made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself [in the prophetic service of his life], and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, [as a self-sacrificing priest.] Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, [the whole universe], and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,"† with whom he is one. "Who is the image of the invisible God ; the first-born [that is, the head] of every creature ; for by him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers ; all things were created by him and for him ; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the Church ; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead ; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.

* Eph. i. 20-23. † Phil. ii. 6-11.

For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell ; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself ; by him, *I say*, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."*

"He hath appointed his Son heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds ; who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person [substance], and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself [by the priestly offering of himself] purged our sins, sat down [in mediatorial supremacy] on the right hand of the Majesty on high ; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they [the name of first-begotten or only-begotten Son]. . . And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith—'And let all the angels of God worship him.' And of the angels he saith—'Who maketh his angels winds and his ministers a flame of fire : ' But unto the Son he saith [making him equal]—'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.'"+ "Jesus Christ is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God ; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."†

In the fourth gospel we find our Lord often referring to both his equality and inequality, his present servitude and his prospective supremacy. In the fifth chapter, in a discourse on himself, he begins with this avowal of his subordination : "Verily, verily, I say unto you the Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father do ;" and towards the close he says—"I can of mine own self do nothing ; as I hear, I judge ; and my judgment is just,

* Coloss. i. 15-20. † Heb. i. 2-8. ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 21, 22.

because I seek not mine own will but the will of the Father which hath sent me." Between these avowals, he declares his coming mediatorial supremacy and his following judgeship: "What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming and now is, [the time of present redemption], when the dead [the spiritually dead] shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also [in due time], because he is the [self-sacrificing] Son of man. Marvel not at this; for the hour [the final hour of redemption] is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."* Respecting his original equality with the Father, he elsewhere says—"Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God [as in the Trinity of the Godhead], he hath seen the Father," whom

* John v. 19-29.

no man hath seen or can see ; and respecting his mediatorial servitude, he says—"The living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father."* Respecting his servitude, he says again—"I do nothing of myself, but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things . . . I seek not mine own glory ;" and respecting his equality, he says—"I and my Father are one."† Respecting his present mediation, he says—"If any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not ; for I am not come to judge the world but to save the world ;" and respecting his future judgeship, he immediately says—"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him : the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him [which means that I shall judge him] in the last day."‡ Respecting his original and essential equality and oneness with the Father, he says—"If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. . . He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. . . I am in the Father and the Father in me ;" and respecting his voluntary subordination, he says—"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter . . . for my Father is greater than I."§ Respecting his coming supremacy, he says—"All things that the Father hath are mine ; therefore said I that he [the Spirit] shall take of mine, and shall tell it unto you. . . He shall glorify me ;" and respecting his present servitude, he says—"I came forth [by commission] from the Father, and am come into the world."|| In his great intercessory prayer, he says respecting his servitude—"I have glorified thee on the earth ;" and respecting his coming supremacy he says

* John vi. 46, 57. † John viii. 28, 50 and x. 30.

‡ John xii. 47, 48. § John xiv. 7, 9, 10, 16, 28.

|| John xvi. 14, 15, 28.

—"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."* Respecting his servitude, he says again—"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world;" and respecting his equality he says—"All mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them."†

It is impossible to overrate the importance of these distinctions between Christ's essential equality with the Father and his economic equality; between his personal life and his fontal life; between the servitude and the supremacy of his mediation, the servitude of prophetism and priestism on earth and the supremacy of sovereignty in heaven; between the saving mediatorship of current restorative government and the final judgeship of succeeding retributive government. Without these distinctions, the life of Christ in the gospels, and particularly his discourses in the fourth, are very imperfectly understood; and the Messianic exaltation of the epistles is but half revealed. Without them we have no key to what Paul says about the ultimate subjection of the Son: "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."‡ The voluntary subjection of the Son, in mediatorial prophethood and priesthood, we can understand, but what does this subjection mean? It means the conclusion of mediatorial supremacy and of the economic equality with the Father which that supremacy involves. The original and essential equality of Christ's Godhead is eternal, "the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever;" but the secondary and official equality of Christ's media-

* John xvii. 4, 5. † John xvii. 6, 10. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 28.

torial sovereignty is temporal, ending with the consummation of redemption. The concluding and crowning act of restorative rule is the redemption of our bodies; and accordingly, when "they that are Christ's" are raised from the dead, "at his coming, then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom [of mediatorial sovereignty] to God, even the Father; when [in fulfilment of the task confided to him] he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. Death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed." The subjection of the Son is not the subjection of his divine nature but the surrender and cessation of his mediatorial sovereignty. The divinity of Christ is immutable, and the hypostatic union of the divine and human nature is indissoluble and eternal; but the Son, as mediator, shall cease to rule the universe for the world's salvation and for the conquest of all hostility to God, and the primary government of God, the conservative and retributive, shall be resumed over the whole universe forever. Christ as mediator shall reign no more; Christ, as ex-mediator, shall re-establish the original government of God, by "executing judgment;" and Christ, as God, with the Father and the Spirit, shall have "glory and majesty, dominion and power" forever, or, in other words, "God shall be all in all." Christ is now rewarded for economic inequality on earth by economic equality in heaven, or, in other words, for mediatorial servitude by mediatorial supremacy. This reward, which means the redemption of the world, was "the joy set before him" when "he endured the cross and despised the shame;" and because it is official and rectoral equality with God, it is called sitting down at the right hand of the throne of God,

or sitting down with the Father on his throne.* This is the prosperity, in his hand, of Jehovah's pleasure, in which he sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. This is the division of a portion with the great and of the spoil with the strong, as the recompense for pouring out his soul unto death, for association with transgressors, for bearing the sin of many, and for making intercession for the transgressors.† This is the joy of our Lord, into which every faithful servant shall enter.‡

WHAT IS THE AGENCY OF THE SPIRIT? The agency of the Holy Spirit is both Representative and Restorative. It is representative because the Spirit is the agent of Christ, or comes in the name of Christ, in the economy of redemption. It is Christ that baptizes men with the Holy Ghost. "He shall testify of me," says Christ.§ "The Spirit of truth shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak. . . He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall tell it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I that he shall take of mine, and tell it unto you."|| The Father sends the Spirit, who is accordingly called "the promise of the Father," but sends him in his Son's name, that is, on his Son's behalf, as his Son's representative and renovating agency: "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name."¶ The Son also sends the Spirit, but sends him from the Father, for the Father and the Son are one: "The Comforter whom I will send unto you from the Father."** The Spirit, in his full influence and power, is the representative of Christ's mediatorial supremacy, and could not come till that supremacy began,

* Rev. iii. 21.

† Isa. liii. 10, 11, 12.

‡ Mt. xxv. 21, 22, 23.

§ John xv. 26.

|| John xvi. 13, 14, 15.

¶ John xiv. 26.

** John xv. 26.

for he is the gift of it; and accordingly it is said—"The Holy Ghost was not yet *given*, because that Jesus was not yet glorified,"* by exaltation from the servitude of terrestrial prophecy and priesthood to the supremacy of celestial sovereignty, according to the order in the words—"the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should *follow*"; and it is in this view that Jesus says—"It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away [to be exalted over all things], the Comforter will not come unto you [in his plenitude of representative power]; but if I depart [to become the head of all principality and power], I will send him unto you."† "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high," the power of the Spirit, whom I, in the glory of my supremacy, will send to you.‡ Accordingly, when about to ascend, Jesus says—"Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. . . Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you."§ The fulfilment of these promises began on the day of Pentecost, ten days after the ascension, as declared by Peter: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted [to the saving sovereignty of mankind, which involves the sovereignty of the universe], and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."||

The Spirit's representative agency is Restorative, as the mediatorial supremacy it represents is restorative. "If I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come he will reprove [ελεγχω, convict or convince] the world of

* John vii. 39.

† John xvi. 7.

‡ Luke xxiv. 49.

§ Acts i. 5, 8.

|| Acts ii. 32, 33.

sin, of righteousness, and of judgment," of sin as the universal human malady, of righteousness as the divine antagonistic remedy, of judgment as the final and divine arbitrament and award. "I have yet many things to say unto you [about these great themes], but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit [I will tell you ere long for], when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all the truth," into the fulness of truth that belongs to the fulness of time, the fulness of mediatorial prophecy, priesthood and sovereignty.* The agency of the Spirit is implied in all right or holy human agency; in repentance, for "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance;" in faith, for "the fruit of the Spirit is in all truth;" and in loving obedience, for "the fruit of the Spirit is love." Spiritual life can have neither commencement nor continuance without the operation of the Spirit of Christ, for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

THE COURSE OF HUMAN AGENCY is from the new choice of repentance, through the cognition of faith, to the obedience of love. Man's first step towards heaven, the beginning of his agency for everlasting life, the very first thing that God commands and to which he calls in the gospel, is repentance, which is fitly and significantly called "repentance unto life." This is man's submission to God and consent to be saved. To this the Father draws men; and so when men yield to his drawing by repenting, their repentance is justly said to be "towards God." All that repent, under the drawing of the Father, are given by the Father to the Son, to believe in him and be saved. "No man," says Jesus, "can come unto me [in faith], except the Father which hath sent me draw him" to repentance towards himself;

* John xvi. 7, 8, 12, 13.

and "every man that hath heard and hath learned of the Father [by repenting] cometh unto me" by believing.* "Thou hast given thy Son power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him," that is, to as many as have repented towards thee, under thy drawing; and "none whom thou gavest me is lost, except the son of perdition."† As "repentance unto life" is "repentance towards God," repentance in compliance with the drawing of the Father, so the faith that "hath everlasting life" is "faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," in consequence of being given by the Father. No one can believe in Christ without being given to him by the Father, for "no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father,"‡ or "except the Father draw him;" and no man, also, can come to Christ without repentant compliance with the Father's drawing, for "every one that hath heard and hath learned of the Father [by repentance towards him] cometh unto me." The Divine agency of drawing and the human agency of repentant-compliance with that drawing or, in other words, of hearing the Father and learning of him, are the complement of each other; and each is necessary to faith in Christ; and faith in Christ, in all that hear the words of Christ, is necessary to eternal life.

Faith in Christ is also called believing in Christ, and "belief of the truth," and "knowledge of the truth," as it is only by the belief of God's testimony or truth we can know anything of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Accordingly, the prophet Isaiah calls faith in Christ knowledge: "By his knowledge," that is, by the knowledge of him, which means by believing in him, "shall my righteous

* John vi. 44, 45.

† John xvii. 2, 12.

‡ John vi. 65.

Servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.”* Our Lord prays for the unity of his people for this great end—“that the world may *believe* that thou hast sent me,” and then again, “that the world may *know* that thou hast sent me,” that is, may know by believing; for “this is life eternal, to know [or believe in] thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,” or as Josus elsewhere expresses it—“ye believe in God; believe also in me.”

The cognition of faith is followed by the obedience of love, for faith works by love, and love fulfils the law. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,” because on believing in Christ, the conquering power of love is shed abroad in the heart by the gift of the Holy Ghost. Faith is the reception of life because it is the reception of love; and it is the reception of love because it is the reception of Christ’s Spirit of love; and it is the reception of the Spirit of Christ because it is the reception of Christ himself. The reception of Christ is followed by conformity to the image and will of Christ; and in this the Christian’s life consists. “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”† In the triplicity of repentance, faith and love, are comprised all things belonging to the course of man’s agency for salvation and eternal life.

§ 5.—*The Instruction of Life.*

The conversation of Christ with Nicodemus not only teaches us what to learn for salvation and eternal life, but also *how to teach*. The great Teacher teaches every teacher.

* Isa. liii. 11. † Collossians ii. 6, 7.

The four gospels are not only a fountain of knowledge for the life of mankind, but a model of skilful instruction for every communicator of Christian truth. Parents, preachers, and Sunday-school teachers should here learn how to adapt themselves to the diversities of human character and capacity. Something of our Lord's instructive wisdom has appeared to us in the study of his words to Nicodemus, but much more remains to be considered, as respects both matter and manner.

In the matter of our Lord's conversation, it ought to be noted, first of all, that what he communicates is *fundamental* truth. In its whole sweep there is not one minor topic. Four great questions are answered. The first is—What is necessary to heaven? And the answer is—To become a child of God by a supernatural nativity. The second question is—How can fallen man become a child of God? And the answer is—Because Christ died to save every believer. The third question is—How came the Son of God to be humbled to death for us? And the answer is—As the gift of God's love to the world for the world's salvation. The fourth question is—Why then are not all saved? And the answer is—Because some, choosing darkness rather than light, and evil instead of good, believe not. Four things are set before us in this unequalled conversation—Birth, Death, Love and Faith; and in these are involved whatever is necessary to Christian life and the kingdom of heaven. They form, in fact, the great quaternion of life.

What is necessary to life is the Regeneration that begins it with the Regenerator himself, the Spirit of God; and this is set before us in the first part. What is necessary

to life is the Death of the quickening Son, who sends the Spirit of life to men ; and this is set before us in the second part. What is necessary to life is the Love of the Father, who munificently gives his Son for the life of the world ; and this is set before us in the third part. What is necessary to life is Faith in the Saviour, the faith that openly practises the truth in God, in contrast with the unbelief of the ill-doing lover of darkness ; and this is set before us in the fourth part. All this is essential truth, without any admixture of circumstantialia ; such truth as every servant of Christ should teach and every soul of man receive. There is nothing here to sanction our "little systems," nothing here for our quarrelsome sects to build on, nothing here to justify the endless divisions of Christendom, or the uncertain sounds of a thousand pulpits. There is nothing here about the great political question of the right relationship of Judea to Rome, nothing about the differences between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, nothing about the culture and mission of the Greeks, nothing about the probable developments of the Gentile powers, nothing about the mutual antagonism of Jews and Samaritans, nothing about Rabbinical rivalries. Nothing of all this, nothing like it, nothing of the numerous questions that absorbed the Rabbis and entertained the synagogues and perplexed the people, nothing incidental or circumstantial, finds place in this conversation. One thing is needful, divine life in the soul, and it is this our Lord teaches and urges.

It is also most noteworthy that Christ presents the *moral* incipency of life before the legal. Two great concomitant blessings constitute salvation, restoration to purity

and exemption from penalty, which, in the technical language of theological schools, are usually denoted as sanctification and justification. Sanctification begins, justification takes place, on believing. The beginning of sanctification is regeneration or the new birth. How should these two great constituents of salvation be presented to men? Although they are inseparable, we cannot well present both at once, for they are so different in kind as to require distinct exposition. Shall we first show men the necessity of exemption from all legal penalty, by substitutionary righteousness and simple faith, in order to true religiousness both below and above? So the wisdom of all our great divines avers, declaring that, in the order of thought, justification is first. Or, shall we first show men the necessity of being washed from their impurity and made Christlike in character? The wisdom of Christ says "yes" to the last question, and teaches us to set before the world, first of all, the necessity of restoration to purity. Salvation is not best proclaimed to such a man as Nicodemus in the first place as a matter of law, but as a matter of life, as a spiritual and divine cleansing. Justification involves law and justice; and law and justice, in connection with our salvation, involve many nice and subtle distinctions, to task the intellect and perhaps perplex the head; but our first business with men, as sinners, is so to avoid subtlety and controversy and exhibit vital facts as to touch the heart, to awaken a sense of sinfulness and of utter unfitness for God's service and kingdom, to show the necessity of a thorough renovation of heart and life. "By the law is the knowledge of sin," because in the light of the law we see how much evil we have done, how impure must be the heart that does it, how terrible is the penalty of doing it, and how impossible it is for us ever to be like God

without the influence and indwelling of his Holy Spirit. This necessary renewal is really what Christ first sets before Nicodemus. He needed to be cleansed by that Spirit whose symbol is the purifying water, and to become thoroughly spiritual by regenerating love. Farther on, in the concluding part of the conversation, the absolution of salvation is denoted: "He that believeth is not condemned." Christ begins with regeneration and ends with justification and the work of truth.

So also the Apostles taught. It is to the Roman and Galatian Christians, not in addressing the unsaved, that Paul chiefly discusses the great question of justification by faith without deeds of law, though he does not withhold it from the Jews, the elect and professed people of God, for we find him teaching it in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia.* But to the idolatrous Athenians, what he speaks of is the true God, the oneness of mankind, repentance and judgment, the ordination and resurrection of Jesus. To Felix, the Roman governor, what he speaks of is a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men, righteousness, temperance and coming judgment. The forensic aspect of salvation is of the greatest importance to the believer, and to some inquirers it may be a prime necessity, but the moral aspect is more likely to impress and move the careless and impenitent, the formal and unspiritual. Every man is more or less conscious of impurity, of evil words and deeds, evil tempers and unhallowed passions; and nothing takes such hold of him as the necessity of a great cleansing change of heart, a divine renovation and a holy life, to prepare him for the kingdom of heaven. Luther shook Europe with the great truth of

* Acts xiii. 38, 39.

justification by faith only, in opposition to the Papal doctrine of justification by faith and works, confounded the ecclesiastical Pharisees, and inaugurated the great Reformation era ; but how far he succeeded in bringing men into newness of life, by the due inculcation of regeneration also, is not so certain. Wesley and Whitfield and their coadjutors, two hundred years later, baptized into the spirit of Christ's conversation with Nicodemus, proclaimed the necessity of a new birth and a new life, a life of Scriptural holiness before God and man, as well as justification by faith only ; and the results have been glorious, and bid fair to be both world-wide and world-during. What church in Protestant Christendom, what country in the world that knows anything of the gospel, has not felt the mighty movement ? It may all be summed up in regenerated men preaching regeneration, like Christ to Nicodemus. Luther's teaching was primarily justification by faith only, Wesley's teaching was primarily regeneration by the Spirit ; Luther wielded theological weapons and achieved a theological triumph, Wesley wielded revival weapons, as well as theological, and achieved a great revival ; each, of course, as the servant and messenger of Christ. Luther taught and preached like the apostles to the churches, setting forth the forensic aspect of salvation, and one-tenth of the ecclesiastical Babylon fell beneath his Titanic blows ; Wesley taught and preached, like Christ to Nicodemus, in highways and by-ways, in season and out of season, and God gave such showers of blessing as have ever since been turning the wilderness of church and world into a fruitful field. Let no man depreciate or neglect the great truth of instantaneous and complete exemption, by both grace and justice, from all legal penalty, without any legal excellence, through believing in the Lord our righteousness. It was well

described by Luther as the article of a standing or a falling Church ; but at the same time, let no Christian teacher forget that the Master himself puts regeneration didactically foremost, and that the Holy Spirit in believers is the article of a living or a dead Church, a living or a dead soul, as it is or is not rightly held. Love is holiness, love is life ; and just in proportion as this is possessed and preached, as the fruit of faith in Christ, is there power to conquer and bless, power to do and suffer, power to win and widen. It is this that casts out fear and overcomes the world, for it seeks not its own, but as the very presence and power of God himself, as the transplanted grace of Christ in the heart of man, goes forth to teach and preach, to do and dare, to spend and be spent, that the earth may be filled with the glory of God.

The teaching of Christ is remarkably *practical*, not only in preferring essential truth to circumstantial, and the moral incipience of Christian life to the legal, but also in the very order of such truth. Had he taught theoretically or conformed to human philosophy, he would have begun at the beginning and descended to the end, teaching from cause to effect, from the eternal purpose in the mind of God to the matured result in the mind of man ; but because he was a practical teacher, adapting truth to the popular intellect and not to the philosophic, to the case before him and not to some ideal case, his method is the very reverse. He begins with the human result, not the divine origination, with man's spiritual nativity and not with the eternal love and counsel from which it springs. He is practical because he deals with what is before him, because he begins with what is personal and experimental, not with what is

abstract and genetic. Human wisdom would probably begin with the fountain-love of the Father, and trace it through the channel of the Son's vicarious sufferings to the influence and efficiency of the Holy Spirit in the new creation. But Christ takes the very opposite course. He begins with man's wants and ascends to God's munificence: "Ye must be born again . . . God so loved the world." He begins with the discharge of the water of life into the desert and deadness of humanity, and then traces the mighty stream of blessing back and up to the very *fons et origo* (the very font and source)—the Father's munificent and unsparing love. He at once brings the great theme of life into contact with his hearer's heart, and presses it home in its personal bearing and necessity: "Thou a Master in Israel, and not knowing these things! Hearing of earthly things, and yet not believing! Listening to a recognized teacher from God without really learning!" He says nothing of the human means of life till he denotes the divine provision for it. First of all, it is the Spirit that regenerates and the Son that redeems; it is from the ocean of Paternal affection and benignity that everlasting life issues; and man is to receive it by believing. After God's glorious agency, that resolves, redeems and regenerates, comes the agency of man, that submits and accepts. "As apples of gold in baskets of silver," so are the fitly spoken words of the Word of God.

How skilfully and graciously Christ teaches Nicodemus, *the aged*, meeting his objections and prejudices, and suggesting trains of thought that should lead him into the light of life! How successfully, in all probability, he pours the light on this dull and darkened heart! A young

rich ruler once came to him but went away grieved, because he was told (as necessary for him) to relinquish his great possessions, for the sake of heavenly treasure ; his case seemed hopeful at the beginning, yet the last we hear of him is that he is gone from Christ ; but the old man that came so timidly and suspiciously at night gives subsequent evidence that he had not been taught in vain. Let us not be too sure of the young or be hopeless about the old, but give to every one his portion, telling the truth in season, out of season, with all long-suffering and wisdom, that we may save ourselves and them that hear us, not knowing whether the morning or the evening seed-sowing shall prosper, or whether both shall be alike good.

No preacher need travel out of this *comprehensive* conversation to find the truth that is necessary to be told to men for salvation ; and no seeker of salvation need travel out of this conversation to find the truth that is necessary for his own spiritual and eternal welfare. How wonderful it is that in so small a space so much divine and saving truth should be comprised ! Well might the Master say—“ We speak that we do know and testify that we have seen ;” and well might his Harbinger say of him—“ He is above all . . . what he hath seen and heard [what he knows personally] that he testifieth. . . He that hath received his testimony hath set his seal that God is true. For He whom God sent speaketh the words of God ; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth in the Son hath eternal life, but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God

abideth on him.* The more we live in the light and spirit of this conversation, searching it for ourselves and spreading it abroad to others, the more shall we have power with both God and man. How ample its range, and how rich its contents! Regeneration makes us alive; justification makes us securely bold; dying grace is our ample and everlasting foundation; self-devoting love is our new being's source and aim; faith in Christ opens every storehouse of redemptive wealth and blessing; while loving obedience is the scattered or clustered fruit of the living tree, to the glory and praise of God.

Christ's conversation with Nicodemus should serve as a *specimen* of his teaching generally; and the thorough study of the specimen should prepare us to explore the whole of so rich a divine mine. All Christ's words, like his words to Nicodemus, are distinguished by depth and wealth. They are all the wisdom of God, though not seldom in a mystery, and claim the most minute and thorough investigation. Many a nugget lies hid in them from the careless or hasty reader. Many a priceless gem is in their depths, to which scarcely any one goes down. Many a momentous implication is undiscerned, many an important use is unperceived. So simple and natural, so easy and unostentatious is the style, that every worshipper of appearances misses the hidden wealth, and goes after gaudy pictures and swelling words that cannot profit. But the words of Christ's mouth are all "plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge," that "seek her as

* John iii. 31-36 : Alford.

silver, and search for her as hid treasure," till they "understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."

Much has been written and spoken about the works of Christ, as evidence and illustration of his Messiahship, but surely not enough about the WORDS. Both his silence and his speech are golden and divine. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing that man is not able or prepared to know; and so Christ says—"I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now." How skilfully and graciously he adapts his lessons and illustrations to them that are without, and his expositions to them that are within! How aptly and admirably he draws comparisons from Nature and Man, dignifying what is most familiar, familiarizing what is most dignified, but never taking his illustrations from what is strange and abstruse! With what majestic calmness, with what divine gentleness, with what unflinching tenderness, with what unswerving and unhesitating faithfulness, he addresses all ranks and classes! His voice is never heard in the streets, yet his line is gone out through all society, and his words to the ends of the land. Little children, playing in the market or drawn by his benignity, young and old, rich and poor, rulers and beggars, Pharisees and Sadducees, the speculative and the practical, the worldly and the spiritual, are all understood and instructed by the Light of the world. The changes with him of time and place serve only to develop the riches of his wisdom and knowledge. On the mountain's brow, at the festive table, on the calm or stormy water, in the quiet night, in the busy daytime, at the ancient well, on the scorched and dusty road, in the splendid temple, in the unpretentious synagogue, with the heaving multitude, in the deep seclusion, in the genial home of Bethany or the

rich resort of company, anywhere, everywhere, "the Life is the Light of men." No problem puzzles him, no veil obstructs him, no net entangles him, no malevolence perturbs him, no danger daunts him, no indocility irritates him, no idle and prurient curiosity is fed by him. Every one willing to learn is instructed, every hypocritical questioner is unmasked, till at length no one dares approach him with frivolity or impertinence. What does all this amount to but the didactic demonstration of his divinity? As no man could do the miracles that he did, except God was with him, so no one could utter the words that he uttered, except God was in him.

In vain do men object to the miracles of the gospels. The gospels themselves are miracles. Old Egypt, proud Babylon, sagacious Nineveh, cultured Greece, dominant Rome, never knew aught like the Nazarene's wisdom. No other religious books are comparable to ours. There is nothing in the gospels of the frivolity, commonplace, falsity, secularity and impurity of the treasured writings of China, India, Persia, Greece and Arabia; and there is nothing in these like the elevation and depth, the originality and suggestiveness, the purity and pathos, the germinancy and potency, the comprehensiveness and adaptation of the words of the Lord Jesus.

Do men object to miracles? How could Christianity spring up without them in the very ripeness of Time? How can the miraculous words be dissociated from miraculous works? But is not Jesus himself the great Miracle of the world? The carpenter of Nazareth is conquering the Cosmos. All religious questions are resolving themselves into this—THE RELIGION OF JESUS OR NONE. The whole earth has been ransacked, even its graves have been emptied, to recover man's oldest wisdom; and

now the culture of all Humanity is coming rapidly to this conclusion—that the religious Battle of the world is to be fought and determined around the Galilean, and nowhere else. There is nothing for mankind but Christianity or Atheism. Every contest is hastening to this alternative; every controversy is settling into this tremendous issue. And the upshot is not doubtful. Our race is not relapsing into atheistic night or the cesspool of sensuality. The dial denotes progress, and the advancing daylight is in the sky. Religion without miracle is religion without the words as well as the works of the Lord Jesus; it is religion without Jesus; and religion without Jesus is no religion at all, but the folly of the heart that cries—"No God." To all other religions and religious writings but ours we say—Stand down and depart. You have long and largely been tried, but only to be found wanting. You can mock us no more with your lying trumpery and impure vanity. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know the true One; and we are in the true One, in his Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

The author's special interest in this conversation is easily accounted for. At sixteen years of age, in the transit of a Canadian hayfield, some of the Master's words to Nicodemus about the new birth, fell upon his ear, as an announcement of divine authority but unknown import, occasioning earnest prayer for the mysterious change, till the injury of a logging-field served to give him (like Philip to the Eunuch) a guide to understanding in the sequel, Mr. ANDREW STEVENSON, whose memory is fragrant to the Author and to many still living, as the spices of *Avahy* the

blest." The light that began to be kindled then, in the author's heart, the light of life, has never since ceased to shine, and has been reflected, however feebly, in a ministry of two-score years and a believing life of more. It is his aim and prayer, in this exegetical essay, to help to shed that light through the Press, both before his death and after. Time and opportunity did not occur before ; but now it is felt as a great privilege and pleasure to send it forth among the beloved brethren of his first fellowship and in the land of his spiritual nativity. The dearest land to the author's heart is CANADA, for here the morning of an everlasting day broke upon his soul, here the light of heavenly life first gladdened his eye, here the music of salvation first fell upon his ear, here his first friendships were formed, here his Master graciously put him into the ministry, here his ministerial first-fruits were gathered, here the good Providence of his life has replaced him, after an absence of twenty-two years, and here he is happily re-united to the Church of his spiritual childhood and early service. Nowhere else has he more found the religion of life—though he has rejoiced to find it elsewhere often ; and both to his first friends in Christ and all others he commits this earnest attempt to illustrate the words that were spoken by the Lord, more than eighteen hundred years ago, in the holy city, to a Jewish ruler, for the ages of redemption and the world of mankind.

"AS EVERY MAN HATH RECEIVED THE GIFT, EVEN SO MINISTER THE SAME ONE TO ANOTHER, AS GOOD STEWARDS OF THE MANIFOLD GRACE OF GOD . . . THAT GOD IN ALL THINGS MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, TO WHOM BE PRAISE AND DOMINION FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN."